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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number of people in the public sector who are employed in health care has increased from 2.5 million to 3.5 million (Department of Health 2000).

There are a number of reasons for the increase in the number of people employed in the public sector. One reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the UK. Another reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the health care sector. A third reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the education sector. A fourth reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the social care sector.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has led to a number of challenges for the public sector. One challenge is that the public sector has become a major employer in the health care sector, and this has led to a number of challenges for the health care sector. Another challenge is that the public sector has become a major employer in the education sector, and this has led to a number of challenges for the education sector. A third challenge is that the public sector has become a major employer in the social care sector, and this has led to a number of challenges for the social care sector.

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LOTOS-EATING:

A SUMMER BOOK.



LOTOS - EATING:

A Summer Book.

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS,

AUTHOR OF "HILK NOTES," "THE WANDERER IN SYRIA," ETC. ETC.

"There's rosemary—that's for remembrance."

"Tear not my sloth, that I
Fold my arms beside the brook;
Each cloud that floated in the sky
Writes a letter in my book.

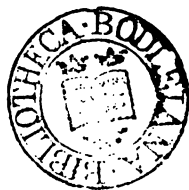
Ohide me not, laborious band,
For the idle flowers I brought—
Every aster in my hand
Goes home loaded with a thought."

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1852.

203. cl, 324



TO
CHARLES A. DANA,
THE FOLLOWING LETTERS
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY HIS FRIEND,

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

MAY. 1852.



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LOTOS-EATING:

A SUMMER BOOK.



I.

THE HUDSON AND THE RHINE.



NEWBURGH ON THE HUDSON.

JULY.

WHERE could a man meet the summer more pleasantly than in the fragrant silence of a garden whence have emanated the most practical and poetic suggestions towards the greater dignity, comfort and elegance of country life? If the aspect of our landscape yearly improves, in the beauty of the houses, and in tasteful and picturesque rural treatment, our enjoyment of it will be an obligation to Mr. Downing.

Not four days away from the city, I have not yet

done roaming, bewildered with the summer's breath, through the garden, smelling of all the flowers, and returning to lie upon the lawn, and bask, dreaming, in the July sun. What a cold word is "beautiful" to express the extacy which, in some choice moments of midsummer, suddenly overwhelms your mind, like an unexpected and exquisite thought.

I found a few late Spring-flowers this morning, upon the lawn, and welcomed them with Robert Herrick's Greeting to the Violets;

" Welcome, maids of honour,
 You do bring
 In the Spring;
 And wait upon her.

She has virgins many,
 Fresh and fair;
 Yet you are
 More sweet than any.

You're the Maiden Posies,
 And so graced,
 To be placed
 'Fore damask roses.

Yet though thus respected,
 By-and-by,
 You do lie,
 Poor girls, neglected."

As I lay repeating these lines, whose melody is as

delicate as the odour of the flowers they sing, I saw the steamer, crowded with passengers, hurrying away from the city. For none more than Americans make it a principle to desert the city, and none less than Americans know how to dispense with the city. So we compromise by taking the city with us, and the country gently laughs us to scorn.

Although the day was tropical on which we left New York, the "Reindeer" ran with us as if we had been mere Laplanders, and our way a frozen plain, instead of the broad, blue river. It is only in the steamer that the Hudson can be truly perceived and enjoyed. In the Indian summer, the western shore, seen from the railroad, is a swiftly-unrolling panorama of dreams, yet the rush and roar and sharp steam-shriek would have roused Rip Van Winkle himself, and the dust would have choked and blinded him as he opened his eyes. The railroad will answer to deliver legislators at Albany, although which "side up" is a little uncertain. But the traveller who loves the law of beauty and pursues pleasure, will take the steamer and secure silence, cleanliness, sufficient speed, and an unencumbered enjoyment of the landscape.

If the trains are as thronged as the boats, they do well. It was curious to set forth upon a river-excursion, surrounded by hundreds bent upon similar summer pleasures, and yet see no red hand-book and no

state travelling carriage upon the forward deck, with a state-travelling countenance of an English Milord on the inside, and the ruddy, round cheeks of state-travelling Abigails, in the rumble behind. These are Rhenish reminiscences. But they are as much part of a journey up the Rhine as ever Drachenfels or St. Goar.

John Bull, upon his travels, is an old joke, as well to himself as others; and the amusement is never exhausted. Yet he is the boldest and best of travellers. He carries bottled ale to Nineveh, and black tea to the top of Mont Blanc, and haunts Norwegian rivers with the latest improved angling "flies;" but he carries integrity, heroism, and intelligence also. His patriotism amounts to prejudice; yet, if there is any cosmopolitan, it is John Bull. He takes pride, indeed, in asserting his prejudices, and insisting upon his black tea everywhere and in all societies. But his sublime scepticism of any excellence out of England is pleasanter than our crude mixture of boastfulness and subserviency. It was remarkable during the revolutions of 1848, in Europe, that there were no monarchists so absolute as the Americans. They declared, almost to a man, that Europe was not fit for republicanism. As if time would ripen republics from despotisms, so that, like mellow pears, they would fall off without any confusion, or as if it were

the habits of kings to educate their subjects to dispense with royalty.

But it is still very amusing to see the English patronize the Continent. They ascend the Rhine imperturbably. They evidently feel that they are conferring much more honour upon the landscape by looking at it, than ever the landscape can give them pleasure. And in this annual overflow of the Continent with cockneys, is the point of Thackeray's "Kickleburys on the Rhine"—a picture whose breadth is hardly broader than the reality, and which requires you to be a traveller fully to enjoy.

This was the pith of my chat with willow as we sped along under the Palisades, and threaded the Highlands.

Of course these comparisons soon led to the grand question which usually consumes the three hours from Murray-street to West Point—the comparative claims of interest in the rivers themselves.

The first day upon the Rhine is an epoch in the traveller's memory. I came out of the Tyrol through Southern Germany to Heidelberg, and on a brilliant July morning took the steamer at Mayence for Boppard, a few miles above Coblenz, and not far below St. Goar. It was a soft, windless day. I lay in the very bow of the boat, with a Scotch boy going home for the

summer, from his school in Zurich. All day he buzzed in my ears stories of Switzerland and Scotland, and through his words I saw the misty and snowy grandeur of each. Our way was straight over the gleaming river, by the open spaces of Nassau and the sunny slopes of the vineyards of the Schloss Johannisberger, through the narrow pass of Bingen, where the highlands of the Rhine begin—and under the Rudesheimer vines and the little castles, it still wound onward, every mile revealing the picture which fancy had so plainly seen, until late in the afternoon I stepped ashore at Boppard.

On the other side of the river were the ruins of the twin castles of "The Brothers," which every reader of Bulwer's "Pilgrims of the Rhine" remembers; and crossing in a small boat at twilight, we climbed the conical hills, and rambled and stumbled by moonlight among the ruins. The feeling of that evening was of the nameless sadness, which is always born of moonlight in spots of romantic association. It would not be possible to experience the same thing upon any other than that river. The Rhine has its own character, its own romance; and Uhland's ballad, with which I accompanied the slow dip of the oars, as at twilight we rowed homewards, is the music and the meaning of the Rhine.

“ Many a year is in its grave,
Since I crossed the restless wave,
And the evening, fair as ever,
Shines on ruin, rock, and river.

Then, in this same boat, beside,
Sat two comrades, old and tried ;
One with all a father's truth,
One with all the fire of youth.

One on earth in silence wrought,
And his grave in silence sought,
But the younger, brighter form,
Passed in battle and in storm.

So whene'er I turn my eye
Back upon the days gone by,
Saddening thoughts of friends come o'er me,
Friends, who closed their course before me.

Yet what binds us friend to friend
But that soul with soul can blend ?
Soul-like were those hours of yore :
Let us walk in soul once more ?

Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee :
Take, I give it willingly,
For, invisible to thee,
Spirits twain have crossed with me.”

A few evenings afterwards I was standing with a fellow-countryman upon the terrace of the castle of Heidelberg, looking out upon the glorious opening of the Neckar valley upon the plain of the Rhine, and was severely taken to task by him for my indiscreet

Rhenish raptures and absolute light-speaking of the Hudson.

“Of course you don’t prefer the Rhine?” exclaimed my friend with patriotic ire.

I contemplated the height of the terrace from the ground, and accommodated my answer to it.

“Yes! ‘for this night only’ I think I do. But I have no doubt I shall sleep it off. I am sure I shall be better in the morning.”

“Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn,
My true-love sighed for sorrow,
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow.”

I did not sleep it off, however, that night, at least, for a day or two afterwards I returned to the Rhine, and in my friend’s absence carried the question clear against the Hudson.

The difference between the rivers is that of the countries. The Rhine is a narrow belt of turbid water winding among the vineyards that wall it upon each side. In its beautiful reach between Bingen and Bonn, the only beautiful part of the river, except near Lake Constance, it has no shores but vineyarded hill-sides and occasionally a narrow grain-field in front of them. There are no trees, no varieties of outline; and the vines, regularly planted and kept short for wine,

not left to luxuriate at length, for beauty, are a little formal in their impression. The castles—the want of which is so lamented upon the Hudson shores—are not imposing, but romantic. They are rather small and toy-like, and stand like small sentries upon small hills commanding the entrances to small valleys.

But they are interesting enough to make their own traditions, even better than those you read in Murray's red-book: and the mass of travellers who merely pass in the steamers, when the white glare of noon hardens the hills as if they were sullen, and would not reveal their charms to a hasty stare, can have but faint idea of the tranquil and romantic beauty of the river.

A river is the coyest of friends. You must love it and live with it before you can know it.

“ And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.”

The Rhine after all, is the theme and mistress of romance and song—although, to many of us, that fame be only traditional. The Rhine songs, both those which directly celebrate its beauty, and those which are ballads of life upon its banks, are among the most sonorous in the songful German literature.

It is the Rhine wine, pure Rhenish, the blood of the life, that blooms along these monotonous hill-sides, which is the wine poetic, that routs all the Temperance

Societies. The foliage of the vine itself is fair and lustrous. It wreathes the hot hills with a gorgeous garland, and makes the day upon the Rhine a festival. Then the old crumbling castles, if vague in fame, are so much the more suggestive; and from one shattered buttress to another, miles away on a distant hill-top, the gay vine-garland sweeps, alive now, as much as ever; and by the vivid contrasts softens the suggestion and deepens the delight.

Near St. Goar you glide under the rock of the Lorelei. Henry Heine, in one of the most tender of his songs, relates its mournful tradition, which is the most beautiful and wildest of the Rhine Willow and Xtopher, and I sing it nightly as we lie on the lawn here, watching the moonlight streaming upon the river, and to-day Xtopher has translated it without letting the aroma escape. The first line of the last verse is hard to render. The verb in German expresses the river embracing the boat and sailor, like a serpent with its folds.

“ I know not what it presages,
 This heart with sadness fraught;
 'Tis a tale of the olden ages,
 That will not from my thought.
 The air grows cool and darkles,
 The Rhine flows calmly on,
 The mountain summit sparkles
 In the light of the setting sun.

There sits in soft reclining
A maiden wondrous fair,
With golden raiment shining,
And combing her golden hair.

With a comb of gold she combs it,
And combing, low singeth she,
A song of strange, sweet sadness,
A wonderful melody.

The sailor shudders as o'er him
The strain comes floating by ;
He sees not the cliffs before him,
He only looks on high.

Ah ! round him the dark waves flinging
Their arms, draw him slowly down,—
And this with her wild, sweet singing,
The Lorelei has done."

Mendelssohn was to have written an opera upon this story and had already commenced it, but the King of Prussia, who is fond of the classics, ordered the composer, who was the royal director of music, to write an overture and choruses for the *Antigone*. We have lost in that opera the companion of *Don Giovanni*: a different kind, of course, for Mozart was all melody, and Mendelssohn had only rhythm. In his music the melody is like a faint perfume in a dreamy south wind. How long must we wait for another fine ear to detect and interpret those weird melodies of the Lorelei?

These are the genuine delights of the Rhine. They are those of romantic association and suggestion. They are those which are only possible in an old and storied country. It is not what you see there, but what you feel through what you see, that charms you. The wild grape in our woods is pleasant from the association with the Rhenish vineyards, and they in turn from their association with the glory of the grape in all literature and tradition. The Rhine is a lyric or a ballad.

Avoid the steamer, if you can, and in some country market-boat float at evening or morning along its shores, following the wildest whim of fancy, with Uhland in one pocket and a *flasche* of Rudesheimer in the other, dozing away the noon in the coolest corner of some old ruin, and dreaming of Ariadne as you drift, sighing, beneath the moon-lighted vineyards. Then you, too, will exasperate some chance friend at Heidelberg, and believe in the Rhine, for that night only.

I know that romance is in the poet's heart, and not in the outward forms he sees. But there is a technical material of romance—the moonlight, a ruin, an Italian girl, for instance—which is useful in begetting a romantic mood of mind, as a quotation will often suggest verses that haunt you all day long. And it is in this material that the Rhine is so rich.

The Hudson, however, is larger and grander. It is not to be devoured in detail. No region without association, is, except by science. But its spacious and stately character, its varied and magnificent outline, from the Palisades to the Catskill, are as epical as the loveliness of the Rhine is lyrical. The Hudson implies a continent behind. For vineyards it has forests. For a belt of water, a majestic stream. For graceful and grain-goldened hills it has imposing mountains. There is no littleness about the Hudson, but there is in the Rhine. Here everything is boldly touched. What lucid and penetrant lights, what broad and sober shadows! The river moistens the feet, and the clouds anoint the heads, of regal hills. The Danube has, in parts, glimpses of such grandeur. The Elbe has sometimes such delicately penciled effects. But no European river is so lordly in its bearing; none flows in such state to the sea.

Of all our rivers that I know, the Hudson, with all this grandeur, has the most exquisite episodes. Its morning and evening reaches are like the lakes of dreams. Looking from this garden, at twilight, toward the huge hills enamelled with soft darkness, that guard the entrance of the Highlands, near West Point, I "would be a merman bold," to float on the last ray through that mysterious gate to the softest shadow in Cro'nest, where, if I *were* a merman bold, I should

know the culprit fay was sleeping. Out of that dim portal glide the white sails of sloops, like spectres: they loiter languidly along the bases of the hills, as the evening breeze runs after them, enamoured; and they fly, taking my fascinated eyes captive, far and far away, until they glimmer like ghosts and strand my sight upon the distance.

These tranquil evening reveries are the seed of such beautiful and characteristic harvests as the Hudson tales of the Sketch Book and Knickerbocker's History. And rubbing those golden grains upon his eyes, Darley has so well perceived the spirit of the river, that in a few simple forms, in the vignette of his Illustrations of Rip Van Winkle, he has seized its suggestion and made it visible. Nor will any lover of the Hudson forget its poet, Joseph Rodman Drake, who in his "Culprit Fay," shows that the spirits of romance and beauty haunt every spot upon which falls the poetic eye. If a man would touch the extremes of experience in a single day, I know not how it could be better done, than after a long bustling morning in Wall-street, to step upon a steamer, and read the "Culprit Fay" by moonlight upon the piazza of the hotel at West Point, looking up the river to Cro'nest.

It was a happy fortune for the beauty of the river that steam did not drive away the sails. It was feared that the steamers would carry all the freight, and so

bereave the river of the characteristic and picturesque life of the white-sailed sloops. But economy was on the side of beauty this time, and it was found cheaper to carry heavy freights by sail, as of old. So the sloops doze and dream along, very beautiful to behold from the banks, and sometimes, awakened as they enter the Highlands by a sudden stoop from some saucy gust coquetting with the hills, they bend and dip, and come crowding towards us through the grim mountain gate, like a troop of white-winged pilgrims fluttering and flying from the Castle of Giant Despair.

You see I have heard the Hudson syrens; perhaps some faint, far-off strain of that lullaby of silence that soothed old Rip to his mountain nap. And while I smell Florida and the tropics, as I sit under the branching magnolia, it goes clear and clean against the Rhine. But when leaving the garden, and sitting under the foliaged trellises of the piazza, we see the moon rise over the opposite mountains—the ghost of the summer day—drawing the outline of the Warwick vase more delicately in shadow upon the sward than ever the skilful artist carved it in marble; then a glimpse of Grecian beauty penetrates and purifies the night; while, within doors, Willow's hands dream upon the keys of the piano, and singing, sad and sweet enough to silence the Lorelei, completes the discomfiture of the Rhine.

In the moonlight and the music Xtopher and I are
but

“ Such stuff as dreams are made of,”

until

“ From tower or tree-top high,
The sentry elf his call has made,
A streak is in the eastern sky,
Shapes of moonlight flit and fade!
The hill-tops gleam in morning's spring,
The sky-lark shakes his dappled wing,
The day-glimpse glimmers on the lawn,
The cock has crowed and the fays are gone !”

CATSKILL.



II.

CATSKILL.



THE MOUNTAIN HOUSE.

JULY.

THE "New World" is a fillagree frame-work of white wood surrounding a huge engine, which is much too conspicuous. I am speaking, by-the-bye, of the Hudson steamer; and yet, perhaps, the symbol holds for the characteristic expression of the nation. For just as flimsy and over-fine are our social arrangements, our peculiarities of manner and dress, and just so prominent and evident is the homely practical genius that carries us forward, with steam speed, through the sloop-sluggishness of our compeers. A sharp-faced, thought-furrowed, hard-handed American, with his anxious eye and sallow complexion, his nervous motion and concentrated expression, and withal accoutred for travelling in blue over-coat with gilt buttons, dark pantaloons, patent leather boots, and silk vest hung

with charms, chains, and bits of metal, as if the Indian love of lustre lingered in the Yankee, is not unlike one of these steamers, whose machinery, driving it along, jars the cut glass and the choice centre-tables and crimson-covered lounges, and with a like accelerated impetus would shiver the filigree into splinters.

Yet for all this the "New World" is a very pleasant place. It has a light, airy, open, and clean deck, whence you may spy the shyest nook of scenery upon the banks and a spacious cabin, where you do not dine at a huge table, with eager men plunging their forks into dishes before you, and their elbows into your sides, but quietly and pleasantly as at a Parisian café. What an appalling ordeal an American table d'hôte is!—What a chaos of pickles, puddings, and meats!—and each man plunging through everything as if he and the steamer were racing for victory. The waiters, usually of one-third the necessary number, rush up and down the rear of the benches, and cascades of gravies and sauces drip ominously along their wake. It is the seed-time of dyspepsia; and Dickens, in that anti-American novel which none of us can read without feeling its injustice, has yet described, only too well, an American ordinary.

Who can wonder that we are lantern-jawed, lean, sickly, and serious of aspect, when he has dined on a steamer or at a great business hotel? We laugh very

loftily at the Rhine dinners, in which the pudding and fish meet in the middle of the courses. But a Rhine dinner upon the open, upper deck of the steamer, is quiet and orderly and inoffensive, while one of our gregarious repasts must needs offend every man who has some regard for proprieties and some self-respect.

—And Catskill!

Yes, we are rapidly approaching, even while we sit on deck and our eyes slide along the gentle green banks, as we meditate American manners and the extremes that meet in our characteristics. Beyond Poughkeepsie a train darts along the shore, rattling over the stones on the water's edge, and rolling with muffled roar behind the cuts and among the heavy foliage. So nearly matched is our speed that, until the locomotive ran beside us, I did not know how rapid was our silent movement. But there is heat and bustle and dust in the nervous little train, which winds along, like a jointed reptile, while with our stately steamer there is silence, and the cool, constant patter of the dew-drops where our sharp prow cuts the river.

A little above Poughkeepsie the river bends, and the finest point is gained. It is a foreground of cultivated and foliaged hills of great variety of outline, rising as they recede, and ranging and towering at last along the horizon, in the Catskill mountains. It was a brilliant day; and the heavy rounding clouds piled in folds

along the line of the hills—taking, at length, precisely their own hue, and so walling up the earth with a sombre, vaporous rampart, such as Titans and fallen angels storm. As we glided nearer, keen flashes darted from the wall of cloud, and as if riven and rent with its sharpness, the heavy masses rolled asunder; then more heavily piled in dense darkness, fold overlying fold, while the startled wind changed, and rushed down the river, chilled and breathing cold before the storm.

No longer a wall, but a swiftly advancing and devastating power, the storm threw up pile upon pile of jagged blackness into the clear, tender blue of the afternoon, and there was a wail in the hurried gusts that swept past us and over us, and the river curled more and more into sudden waves, which were foam-tipped, and scattered spray.

We were now abreast of the mountains, and far behind them the storm had burst. Down the vast ravines that opened outward toward the river, I saw the first softness of the shower skimming along the distant hill-sides, moister and greyer, until they were merged in mist. Deep in those solemn mountain forests leaped the lightning, and the echo of its wrathful roar surged and boomed among the hills and dashed far up the cliffs and dark hemlock slopes, and crashed over the gurgling brooks, where was none to hear but the trees and the streams, and they were

undismayed, and in the shuddering breeze of the pauses the trees rustled and whispered to the streams, and the streams laughed to themselves—the strange, sweet, mystical laughter that Undine laughed.

“They roll their nine-pins still, among the Catskill,” said Olde to me.

“And there’s a ten-strike,” interposed Swansdowne, as a mighty bolt burst among the hills, but still toward the inner valleys, for the slope toward the river yet stood in cold, dark, purple distinctness.

The breeze was cool and strong as we landed at Catskill. We were huddled ashore rapidly, the board was pulled in, and the “New World” disappeared. I proposed riding up to the Mountain House on the outside of the coach, but Olde smiled and said, “I shall go inside.”

Now Olde loves scenery as well as any man, poet or painter, but he holds that a drenching rain destroys both the beauty of the scene and the capacity for enjoyment of the seer, and while I stood with my hand upon the door, my common sense thoroughly convinced, as well by his action as by his words, but my carnal heart lusting after the loveliness of the cloud-crowned and shower-veiled mountains, there came another ten-strike that suddenly shook a cloud to pieces over our heads and down it came.

"I think I shall go inside too," said I, as I stumbled up the steps and closed the door.

During the first eight miles of the inland drive toward the Mountain House, I enjoyed the prospect of six travellers, four stained leather curtains, and the two wooden windows of the door. It was not cool inside the coach; but without, the wind was in high frolic with the rain, and through the slightest crevice the wily witch dashed us with her missiles, cool but very wet. Then the showers swept along a little, and we threw up the curtains and breathed fresh air, and about three miles from the Mountain House, where the steep ascent commences, Olde and Swansdowne and I jumped out of the stage and walked. The road is very firmly built, and is fortunate in its material of a slaty rock, and in the luxuriance of foliage, for the tangled tree-roots hold the soil together.

The road climbs at first in easy zig-zags, and presently pushes straight on through the woods, and upon the side of a steep ravine; the level-branched foliage sheering regularly down, sheeting the mountain-side with leafy terraces. Between the trunks and down the gorges we looked over a wide but mountainous landscape, and as we ascended, the air became more invigorating with the great height and the coolness of the shower. Two hours before sunset we stood upon the

plateau before the Mountain House, 2,800 feet above the sea.

There is a fine sense of height there, but all mountain views over a plain are alike. You stand on the piazza of the Mountain-House and look directly down into the valley of the Hudson, with only a fore-ground deep beneath you, of a lower layer than that on which you stand, with its precipice of pine and hemlock. The rest stretches then, a smooth surface to the eye, but hilly enough to the feet when you are there, to an unconfined horizon at the north and south, and easterly to the Berkshire hills.

Through this expanse lies the Hudson, not very sinuous, but a line of light dividing the plain. Through the vaporous atmosphere of the twilight it was very effective. Sometimes the mist blotted out individual outlines, and the whole scene was but an abyss with a silver-grey atmosphere, and the higher line of the river was the horizon, and the stream itself a white gleam or sky beyond. Then the distance and the foreground were mingled in a haze, a shining opaque veil, wherein the river was a rent, through which beamed a brightness beyond. Or the vapours clustered toward the south and the stream flowed into them, flashing and far, as into a terrene cloud-land. All the country was chequered with yellow patches of ripe grain, and marked faintly with walls and fences, and looked

rather a vast domain than a mountain-ruled landscape.

Whoever is familiar with mountain scenery will know what to anticipate in the Catskill view. The whole thing is graceful and generous, but not sublime. Your genuine mountaineer (which I am not) shrugs his shoulder at the shoulders of mountains which soar thousands of feet above him and are still shaggy with forest. He draws a long breath over the spacious plain, but he feels the want of that true mountain sublimity, the presence of lonely snow-peaks.

And as we always require in scenery of a similar class, similar emotions, there is necessarily a little disappointment in the Catskill. They are hills rather than mountains. Yet, as they have the fame of mountains, you are recalling your Alpine impressions, all the way up. It is not very wise, perhaps, but it is very natural and rather unavoidable. Yet when the night falls, the silence and coolness of your lofty home impart the genuine mountain tone to your thoughts. Then you begin to acknowledge the family resemblance, and to remember Switzerland.

When I was on the Faulhorn, the highest point upon which a dwelling-house is placed in Europe, and that inhabited for three months only in the year, I stepped out in the middle of the night, and as I looked across the valley of Grindelwald and saw the snow-fields and

ice-precipices of all the *Horns*,—never trodden and never to be trodden by man,—shining cold in the moonlight, my heart stood still as I felt that those awful peaks and I were alone in the solemn solitude. Then I felt the significance of Switzerland, and knew the sublimity of mountains.

“And do you remember,” said Olde, “how delicately the dawn touched those summits with cool, bright fingers, and how their austerity burned and blushed under that caressing, until the sunrise overwhelmed them with rosy flame, and they flashed perfect day far over Switzerland; and hours afterward, when day was old upon the mountain-tops, how gentlemen-travelers turned in their beds in the valley inns and said, ‘Hollo, Tom, the sun is rising!’”

The Mountain House is really unceremonious. You are not required to appear at dinner in ball costume, and if you choose, you may scramble to the Falls in cowhide boots and not in varnished pumps. The house has a long and not ill-proportioned Corinthian colonnade, wooden of course, and glaring white. The last point, however, is a satisfaction from below, for its vivid contrast with the dark green forest reveals the house from a great distance upon the river. The table is well supplied, but Olde and Swansdowne were forced to throw themselves upon the compassion of the chambermaid (I would say *femme-de-chambre*, if a single

eye, slopping shoes, and a thick cotton handkerchief pinned night-cap-wise over the head, would possibly allow that suggestive word), and to submit that a towel of the magnitude of a small *mouchoir* (they did not say *mouchoir*), was not large allowance for two full-grown men. The dame's answer had gravity and instance.

“Gentlemen, how can I give you what we have not?”

A written placard around the house announced that dancing music could be had at the bar. But none wished to polk—and how music could be made in that parlour, which seemed to have been dislocated by some tempestuous mountain ague, remains a mystery to me. There are eight windows, and none of them opposite to any of the others; folding-doors which have gone down the side of the room in some wild architectural dance, and have never returned, and a row of small columns stretching in an independent line across the room, quite irrespective of the middle. It is a dangerous parlour for a nervous man.

We sat on the edge of the precipice, looking off into the black abyss of night. Swansdowne told wild tales of crazy men in lonely nooks in Scotland, and Olde talked of Italy. They were pleasant days, he said, which will return no more.



“ My eyes are full of childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
That in those days I heard.

Thus fares it still in our decay,
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.”



CATSKILL FALLS.



III.

CATSKILL FALLS.



JULY.

I DID not see the sun rise from the Catskill. Therefore my more cunning way would be to give you a florid history of all the sunrises that I have seen from famous places, omitting mention of the chills, yawns, and, in general, very ameliorated admiration of such early spectacles.

Quite unwittingly I was conscious of no sunrise that bright Sunday morning upon the Catskill; yet I was not scornful of it, but only sleepy.

Not scornful, for still flashes along the heights of memory many a Swiss sunrise. That of the Righi, for instance, with the groups of well-whiskered Englishmen and well-booted Americans, gathered upon the Culm and wrapped in coats, cloaks, blankets, and comforters—as if each had arisen, bed and all, and had so stepped out to enjoy the spectacle. A wooden horn was

blown, much vague sentiment was uttered, and the exceeding absurdity of the crowd interfered with the grandeur of the moment.

But beyond these, and above them, were the peaks of the Mid-Alps, celestial snow-fields, smooth and glittering as the sky, and the rugged glaciers sloping into unknown abysses, Niagaran cataracts frozen in foam for ever. There were lesser mountains in the undulating mass of the panorama, green and graceful, or angular with sharp cliffs, sheering perpendicularly away, or gently veering into the glassy calmness of cold lakes, in which the night had bathed, and left its blackness. There was the range of the Jura, dusky and far, and the faint flash of the Aar in the morning mist, and among these awful mountains, and upon them, spots of fame, poetic and patriotic, each one the home of a thousand traditions, each the melody of myriad household songs. It was the region of William Tell all around me.

The keen, cool breath of early morning smote me, as with the heroic spirit of the story, and the sentiments and memories of the spot brightened into significance with the increasing dawn. And as we stood there, too shivering to be sentimental—for the breath which lives “with Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,” blew every feeling away that was not genuine and fair—far over the hushed tumult of peaks which thronged to

the utmost east, came the sun, sowing those sublime snow-fields with glorious day. The light leaped from peak to peak, the only thing alive, glad and gay, worthy to sport with those worthy mates, until the majestic solemnity of the moment yielded to the persuasive warmth of day, and our hearts yearned for the valley.

Do you remember in Tennyson's "Princess," the "small, sweet Idyl" which she read?

"Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height;
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire,
And come, for Love is of the valley; come,
For Love is of the valley; come thou down,
And find him by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with plenty in the maize,
Or red with spurted purple of the vats,
Or fox-like in the vine: nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns;
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls,
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down,
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke

That like a broken purpose waste in air !
So waste not thou : but come ; for all the vales
Await thee, azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I,
Thy shepherd, pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees."

Remembering these things, when I came down and found Olde and Swansdowne under the Corinthian colonnade, I did not feel as if I had seen nothing, although I had lost the Catskill sunrise, which, they told me, was a magnificent effect of slanting light over a level floor of fleecy clouds, much more magnificent, indeed, than any polar ocean could be, except those that poets see.

It was a clear, crystal morning, and after breakfast those who were disposed, repaired to the village of Catskill, twelve miles away, to church. I believe there were not very many. Some of the rest of us looked mountainward. The more distant hills—for there are none lost in mist so far as to seem *most* distant—were sharply drawn, purple cold, and rounded with foliage up the sides. Over the summit we went, and down the purple glen, toward the throbbing heart of the Catskill.

“ And on that morning thro’ the grass,
And by the steaming rills,
We travelled merrily to pass
A day among the hills.”

The road to the Falls is most unromantically distinguishable. A coach-load was to follow, but we scorned coaches — mighty mountaineers that we were!—and went cheerily along past the lake, dark and cold enough to have a dreary tradition, while the vibrant, liquidly-gurgling song of the wood-thrush poured through the trees, and a solitary, flaming golden-rod nodded Autumn to us as we passed. It is a walk through the woods—a wood-road to a finger-post that says curtly, “ To the Falls;” and then down into a dell to a very new and very neat white house and a bar-room, with a balcony over the abyss.

The proprietor of the bar-room is also the genius of the Fall, and drives a trade both with his spirits and his water. In fact, if your romantic nerves can stand the steady truth, the Catskill Fall is *turned on* to accommodate poets and parties of pleasure.

The process of “ doing ” the sight, for those who are limited in time, is very methodical. You leave the hotel and drive in a coach to the bar-room. You “ refresh.” You step out upon the balcony, and look into the abyss. The proprietor of the Fall informs you that the lower one is eighty feet high. You laugh

incredulously—he smiles in return the smile of a *mens conscia recti*. “Would you step down and have the water turned on?” You do step down a somewhat uneven but very safe staircase. You reach the bottom. “Look! now it comes!” and the proud cascade plunges like a freed force into the air, and slips, swimming in foam, away from your gaze.

You would gladly stay all day. But the sage of the party looks at his watch—remembers dinner—deems it time to think of returning; and you climb the staircase—step upon the balcony—throw a last look into the abyss—down the blue mistiness of the winding valley whose repose leads your thoughts far into eternal silence and summer, and mounting the coach you are boxed up again and delivered at the Mountain House just as the dinner-bell rings.

There is something ludicrous and sad in this. But most of us are really only shop-keepers, and natural spectacles are but shop-windows on a great scale. People love the country theoretically, as they do poetry. Very few are heroic enough to confess that is wearisome, even when they are fatigued by it. The reason of which reluctance I suppose to be a lurking consciousness that we ought to love it, that we ought to be satisfied and glad among the hills and under the trees, and that if we are not, it is because the city has corrupted us—because the Syren has sung:

away our strength. The distaste which many clever persons feel for Wordsworth, may often be traced to a want of sympathy with his intense and personal enjoyment of Nature. It is incredible to them, and seems inflated if not false.

This want of direct pleasure and exhilaration in Nature is a matter of regret, as would be the want of love for flowers. A man who has it is never friendless. The wildest or rarest day flushing the landscape with its own character, is his companion and his counsellor. "The mountains are a feeling," the streams are books that babble without nonsense, and the coming and going of the year, as he marks it upon the swelling and fading leaf, is the swelling and dying of celestial music in his heart. Happily no man is always insensible. He cannot always escape the electrical shock of natural grandeur and beauty. A noble landscape, a cataract, a mountain, impresses him imperially, but as vaguely and blindly as a great hero surprises pedlars and pettifoggers.

Olde and Swandowne and I, citizens too, descended the perpendicular staircase to the rock pavement, which, hollowed into a basin in the centre, receives the first long fall. You may picture the general effect of the scene from below by fancying a mountain stream followed up the natural valley between two mountains, until it is checked by an abrupt rocky precipice,

stretching from one hill-side to the other directly across the ravine, and half-concavely pointing down the valley. Directly over the centre of the parapet of this rocky wall flows the Fall. At first it is only the surplus of a dammed mill-stream (I beg pardon), but beyond the mill and the dam, Nature has claimed her own again, and reels the slight stream away, a thread of airy silver, wreathing into rainbow spray.

Indeed, so slight is the Fall, when not turned on, but only dripping through the gate, that there is but a single shoot of watery arrows in Indian file, a trope which any observer of cascades will understand. It is about the volume of the Swiss Staubbach, when it has fallen some four hundred of its nine hundred feet toward the green lawns of Lauterbrunnen, which it never reaches as a fall, except during a "spell of weather," the dissolution of spring, or some other time unseen by Dr. Syntax, and the hunters of the picturesque.

The first effect of the Catskill Fall is very simple and beautiful. Seen from the highest platform, after you have descended and are looking up, it has a quiet grandeur, even, which declines into picturesqueness when you pass below the second broken fall that pours away into the gorge, whence it steals off, singing, between the heavily wooded hill-sides. The great rock, over which flows the first Fall, is hollowed out, a little

above the level of the basin into which it plunges, and you can walk, stooping a little, quite around and behind the thin, flickering Fall. It has a delicate spray of its own, too, when the wind scatters it into the sunlight which touches it into diamond dust; and very gracious was the sun that morning, for when, after our arrival below, the coaches arrived above, and the parties descended, the ladies glided and shrank along under the rock—a motley troop of white ladies of Avenel, if you will, except that for her the Fall parted, and she did not stoop but droop—and as they came around, where the wind had waved the cascade in spray to cool them, the sun flashed suddenly from behind the fleecy clouds and arched them with a rainbow. What could the Catskill do more for them, since it could not part like the Fall of Avenel, and frame them in living silver, as they passed beneath?

They all came down to the level of the second Fall, and there, clustered upon the rocks, we awaited the “turning on,” or rather the artificial spring and imitative effects of snow-melting upon the mountains, produced by our friend of the “Refreshment Saloon,” whose little building perched upon the cliff, at the very point of the Fall, with its friendly basket far overhanging the ravine upon an outstretched pole, like that of an old well, is extremely effective, and recalls vaguely those desert-convents from whose high walls hang

baskets, the sole communication with the world, except through posterns bolted and barred.

The Fall swelled suddenly, and in a moment, a downward volley of flashing arrows of light plunged into the basin beneath. It flaked into spray as it fell, and sheeted the basin near it with foam, and the mist steamed up into the concave abyss, and clouded it, as if to veil the Fall in its most majestic moment. It was of the same character still, but developed into fulness; and the second Fall, pouring over a crescent of rock brilliantly greened with grass and light foliage, and of picturesquely broken outline, overflowed at crevices and points unseen before, and a graceful group of rills danced attendance upon each side of the chief Fall.

Down to the basin of this we descended, and commanded both cascades. But my pen commands no colours, and the neutral tint of words will not glow with the flashing water and the rich, serious green of the banks of foliage, nor seize the movement of the clouds—June clouds—that swam fleecily backward directly over the cascade, adding the sympathy of motion in the moist blue sky to that of the falling water. This was a rare and exquisite effect. The round white clouds hung low, and as they swept swiftly backward seemed to pass through the very narrow dent of rock which the cascade had worn,

as if its own spray had curled into compact cloud, and was so hurrying back again to feed the fountain.

The groups of loiterers exhausted words but not delight, and after resting a little upon the rocks, climbed the cliff again homeward. We lingered below. Swansdowne with rapid pencil was tracing the general outline of the appearance of the full Fall. Olde and I were lying at length gossiping of Switzerland, and watching the shifting splendours of the day; and the Fall, as the gate was closed, gradually dwindled, wasting from that full-bodied maturity and sinking again into infantine weakness and uncertainty.

There is a feeling of life in moving water,—the poets call it *living* water,—when it flows freshly and clear. Therefore we could not watch it, as if pining away, without a little regret, not at the loss of our own pleasure, but at its loss of life. Its song in the ravine behind us grew fainter, subsiding at last into a uniform, gentle gurgling. Whether a solitary in a slouched hat upon the hill-side below us, with tablets in hand, was measuring that murmur into verse I shall never know. But certainly the music of the song I shall never forget.

Sunday stillness brooded over the day. Clear and sweet and sacred it was, like the memory of George Herbert, and his was the hymn we sang that Sunday at the Catskill Fall.

“ Sweet day ! so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die.

Sweet rose ! whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye ;
Thy root is ever in its grave :
And thou must die.

Sweet Spring ! full of sweet days and roses ;
A box where sweets compacted lie ;
My music shows ye have your closes :
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber never gives :
But, though the whole world turns to coal,
That chiefly lives.”

We walked afterwards down the stream for a mile, and I advise every one to do the same, crossing at the usual place and stumbling over the rocks a little at first, but afterwards pushing smoothly on. The path leads you to a pleasant opening where the water polishes a broad pavement, and where bits of the picturesque abound. With his delicately sensitive artistic eye, Swansdowne glanced among the trees and from time to time announced “a Kensett,” as a broad bit of mossed rock or a shapely stretch of trees with the mountain outline beyond, recalled the poetic accuracy and characteristic subjects of that artist.

And so, finding the stones, poems, and pictures, as well as sermons, we voted of course to finish the day at the Fall. A neat and well-cooked dinner in the very small and clean new house near the picturesque bar-room (seen from below) consoled us for the loss of the Mountain House ordinary; and as we dined, a wind furious enough for November, a very cataract of a wind, dashed and swept along the mountain-sides, and Swansdowne and I did privately shiver (it was the 20th of July) until we sallied forth and clomb down the rock again to the first platform.

The water was unchained for us, and the lilies in the extremest depths of the ravine that grow beyond the edge of the usual flowing, were folded once more before sunset in its crystal caresses. The western light streaming up the ravine was of tenderer tone than that of morning, and our thoughts grew tenderer too. Our chat was of Italy now, no longer of Switzerland; and the tranquil sunset closed over a day that will sing as pleasantly through memory as the stream through the solitary dell.

“ To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”

TRENTON FALLS.



IV.

TRENTON FALLS.



JULY.

IN Longfellow's delicious poem to the Waif, he invokes the singing of a song of rest. Sometimes, urges the poet, let us escape the battle-cry and the bugle-call, and repose that we may the better wrestle.

“ Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.”

Trenton is that summer-song of rest.

Only lovely images haunt its remembrance, beautiful as the Iris which in some happy moment of the ramble through the ravine, spans the larger or lesser Fall. Beauty and grace are its praises. You hear them from those who are either hurrying to the grandeur of the Niagara, or from those who, returning, step aside at Utica to enjoy the music of the greater

cataract, softened here at Trenton into an exquisite echo.

It matters little when you see these Falls, whether before or after Niagara. The charm of Trenton is unique, and you will not scorn the violets and lilies because you knelt to the passion-flowers and roses. In the prime of a summer which, from the abundant rains, is singularly unworn and unwithered, a day at Trenton, because of its rare and picturesque but harmonious attractions, is like a feast of flowers. In some choice niche of memory you will lay it aside, not as a sublime statue or a prophetic and solemn picture, but as a vase most delicate, symmetrical if slight, and chased with pastoral tracery.

From Albany — its campagna-like suburbs once passed, a pleasant day made pleasant pictures of the broad, rich, tranquil landscape. The country gained, possibly, in tenderness of aspect that I glanced at it in the intervals of reading Hawthorne's "Seven Gables," and as the heat increased, the monotonous clatter of the cars grew soothing as the airy harpsichord of the fair Alice, dead centuries ago, and persuaded my mind into Clifford's vague and dreamy mood. Floating thus along the fascinating verge of slumber, I opened my eyes upon the placid picturesqueness of the actual landscape, and anon closed them to behold, instantly, the enchanted scenery of sleep. It was a meet



approach to Trenton, a passage through a dream-frescoed corridor, pierced with windows that looked into the real world. In every garden, as we hurried on, wherever was an old tree and a hint of the "moated grange," (they are not many on that railroad,) I looked to see the soft-souled Clifford, Alice Pyncheon, and the high-hearted Hepzibah, seated in the shadow and wondering at the world.

But when the petulant bell rang two o'clock at Utica, dreams vanished, and I emerged into a crowded and confused station and was whirled among porters, luggage, barrows, rival coachmen, bells, gongs, and steam, to the hotel. The regular coach to Trenton had left upon the arrival of the preceding train, but there were several white-hatted individuals of extremely conciliatory and persuasive manners, who launched instantly into extravagant praises of various stages, waggons, and other carriages, all offering the most delightful and easy method of reaching the Falls.

But it was singular to an inquiring mind to remark that whenever you descended to particulars, as to hours, and numbers, and carriages, these romances instantly reeled away into the most astonishing vagueness, and while you fancied one moment that you almost heard the noise of the Fall, the next it was a very indistinguishable and quite inaudible object in the vista of a prolonged perspective. The fact was that

these men who manifested so laudable an interest in your getting to Trenton, comfortably and speedily, wished only to secure your promise to go, and would "arrange" afterwards. Remember that when you come, and act accordingly.

It was clear that nothing could be done until after dinner, which was dispatched, and while I quietly consumed a noxious weed, and patiently awaited my prospects, a short, thick-set, English-looking gentleman crossed the passage, and made me fancy that "two horsemen might have been seen slowly mounting a hill." But before I proceeded farther in the natural reflections of the moment, my co-Trentonians appeared in the shape of a party of twelve; just a coach-load with their luggage, and my own coach-prospects began to dwindle dolefully. Then came the tug of war, and truly "no pent-up Utica" contracted the powers of those rival coach-agents, for I never heard so sharp a struggle for a freight.

The landlord was forced to interfere, while I and the "two horsemen" stood aside,—I, for my part, wincing at every moment of the tranquil summer afternoon wasted from Trenton. Presently there was a lull in the war, but no victory; and when a quiet man led me quietly aside, and asked my views of a little open waggon, and a separate and rapid drive to Trenton, I found they entirely coincided with his, and within a

few moments I was rolling across the spacious sunny plain of the Mohawk.

But mark the chances of life, nor dream of doing "an old stager." My private conveyance, the quiet suggestion of my quiet man, was the property of the very agent who had first accosted me, and who, as I thought, had dropped me from mind as a mere single passenger. Not he. Given, a party of twelve together, on the one hand, and a party of one upon the other, to furnish a coach to the first, at — dollars! and a waggon to the other, at — dollars!! was his problem, and it was solved. Genius had made this man an emperor of nations; fate had placed him in authority over horses and hunters of the picturesque.

My charioteer was a fine boy of sixteen. He whipped along over the plank-road, and gossiped of the horses, the people, and the places we passed. He was sharp-eyed and clear-minded—a bright boy, who may one day be President. As we were slowly climbing the hill, "Have you heard Jenny Lind, Sir?" inquired my Antinous of the stables.

"Yes, often."

"Great woman, Sir. Don't you think so?"

"I do."

"She was here last week, Sir. Get-up, Charlie!"

"Did you hear her?" I asked.

“Yes, Sir, and I drove with her to the Falls—that is, Tom Higgins drove, but I sat on the box.”

“And was she pleased?”

“Yes, Sir; only when she was going to see the Falls, everybody in the hotel ran to the door to look at her, so she went back to her room and then slipped out of the back door.—But there was something better than that, Sir.”

“What was that?”

“She gave Tom Higgins fifty dollars when he drove her back. But there was something still better than that, Sir.”

“Indeed! What was that?”

“Why, Sir, as we came back, we passed a little wood, and she stopped the carriage and stepped out with the rest of the party, and Tom Higgins and I, and went into the wood. It was towards sunset and the wood was beautiful. She walked about a little and picked up flowers, and sung, like to herself, as if it were pleasant. By-and-by she sat down upon a rock and began to sing aloud. But before she stopped, a little bird came and sat upon the bough close by us. I saw it, Sir, with my own eyes, the whole of it,—and when Jenny Lind had done, he began to sing and shout away like she did. While he was singing she looked delighted, and when he stopped she sang again, and—oh! it was beautiful, Sir. But the little

bird wouldn't give it up, and he sang again, but not until she had done. Then Jenny Lind sang as well as ever she could. Her voice seemed to fill the woods all up with music, and when it was over, the little bird was still awhile, but tried it again in a few moments. He couldn't do it, Sir. He sang very bad, and then the foreign gentlemen with Jenny Lind laughed, and they all came back to the carriage."

We had left the plank-road, and were approaching the hotel at the Falls through fine maple woods. It was pleasant to hear the boy's story. Was it a poor prelude to Trenton? I had not dreamed that the romance of the Poet's Lute and the Nightingale should be native to Oneida County no less than to Greece, and that its poet should be my callow charioteer, who may one day be President. When I sat at my window afterward, and in the fading twilight looked over the maple woods, and heard the murmur of Trenton Falls, I wondered if the bird ever reached its nest, or was found dead in the woods without a gun-shot wound.

There is no better hotel than that at Trenton. It is spacious and clean and comfortable, and the table justifies its fame. Moreover it is painted dark and not white, and stands very modestly on the edge of the woods that overhang the ravine of the Falls. Modestly, although it is high, for the glaring, white caravan-series, our summer palaces of pleasure, wear the

flaunting aspect of being no better than they should be. Happy were we, were they always as good!

Poets' fancies only should image the Falls, they are so rich and rare a combination of quiet picturesqueness of beauty, and a sense of resistless force in the rushing waters. You descend from a lofty wood into a long rocky chasm, which the Germans would call a *Grund*, for it is not a valley. It is walled and paved with smooth rocks, and the thronging forest fringes the summit of the wall. Over this smooth pavement slips the river, in those long, swift, still, foamless bounds, which vividly figure the appalling movement of a Titanic serpent. The chasm almost closes up the river, and you see a foamy cascade above. Then, as if the best beauty and mystery were beyond, you creep along a narrow ledge in the rock-side of the throat of the gorge, the water whirling and bubbling beneath, and reach the first large Fall. A slight spray enfolds you, as a baptism in the spirit of the place. A broad ledge of the rock here offers firm and sufficient foot-hold while you gaze at the Falls. Before you is a level parapet of rock, and the river, after sliding very shallowly over the broad bed above, concentrates mainly at one point for a fall, and plunges in a solid amber sheet.

Close by the side of this you climb, and pass along the base of the overhanging mountain, and stooping

under the foot of an imperial cliff, stand before the great Fall, which has two plunges, a long one above, from which the river sheers obliquely over a polished floor of rock, and again plunges. The river bends here, and a high, square, regular bank projects from the cliff, smooth as a garden terrace, and perpetually veiled and softened by the spray. It is one of the most beautiful and boldest points in the long ravine, and when the late light of afternoon falls soft upon it, there is a strange contrast in your feelings as visions of Bocaccio's garden mingle with the wildness of American woods.

Upon the cliff above this great Fall is a little house where the weary may rest, and those who find "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," may pledge the spirit of Trenton in that kind, if not that quality, of nectar which Bocaccio himself would have desired. Here, under the densely foliated trees, sit musing above the Fall, and watch the broad stream concentrate as it nears the verge; and then from the deep dark indigo of the pool collected there, see it pour itself away, a fall of brilliant amber, into the light streaming warmly from the west up the ravine. As you musing gaze, your own fancy will flow from the sombreness of serious thought, and pour itself away in a spray of romance and reverie, far through the golden gloom of the Past and the bright-hued hope of the

Future that streams toward you like the light from the west.

You will recall the European Falls of fame ; you will hear once more the glad Velino " cleave the wave-worn precipice," and mark the dark eyes of Italian girls, who steal to your side as you listen, and say, as if the dark eyes whispered it, " un baioccho, Signore." You will see the Sybilline temple, high-crowning the cliff at Tivoli, and once more, over the sea-surface, but silent and motionless, of the Campagna, your eye will rest upon St. Peter's dome, rising mountain-like from the plain, and Beatrice d'Este will glide a pallid phantom along the marble-floored, cypress-gloomed terraces of the villa. The thousand Alpine cascades of Switzerland will flicker through your memory, slight avalanches of snow-dust shimmering into rainbow-mist; and the Rhine, beneath your back window in the Hotel at Schaffhausen, will plunge once more over its little rocky barrier, sending its murmur far into the haunted depths of the Black Forest beside you. Or, farther and fainter still, the rapids of the Nile and the rills of Lebanon will rush and gurgle, as you did not dream to hear them again, nor will your fancy rest until it sinks in the Oriental languor of the banks of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus.

Wild is the witchery of water, and the spell enchanted, which its ceaseless flowing weaves. Such

pictures were in that amber fall. Such echoes answered those silver cadences. Such names, and places, and memories, are now the synonymes of Trenton. But for you and for others it may sing different songs. An organ of many stops, it discourses sweet music in all. Not like the airy harpsichord of the fair Alice, dead centuries ago, tuned to a single strain, but like the heart of the young Phœbe, gushing gaily or gravely, according as the sun or shadow overswept it.

There is something especially pleasant in the tranquil, family-like character of the house at Trenton. It is by far the best hostelry of the kind that I have encountered in my summer wandering; and, lying away from any town or railroad, the traveller seems to have stepped back into the days when travelling was an event and not a habit, and when the necessity of moderation in speed imposed a corresponding leisure in enjoyment. Doubtless the railroad makes us move mentally, as well as physically, with more rapidity. The eye sees more in life, but does the heart feel more, is experience really richer? Haste breeds indigestion, but happiness lies, first of all, in health.

The man who in the quiet round of life has made friends with every object in the landscape he knows, who sees its changes, and sympathises with them, and who has learned from a single tree what men have

exhausted all libraries and societies without finding—he is of better, because of profounder, experience than his friend who has raced over half the world in a twelve-month, and whose memory is only a kaleidoscope. A mile horizontally on the surface of the earth does not carry you one inch towards its centre, and yet it is in the centre that the gold mines are. A man who truly knows Shakespeare, only, is the master of a thousand who have squeezed the circulating libraries dry.

Do not fail to see Trenton. It is various-voiced. It is the playing of lutes on the moonlight lawn,—as Stoddard delicately sings. It is well to listen for it in the pauses of the steam-shriek of our career. For if once your fancy hears its murmur, you will be as the boatman who catches through the roar of the Rhine, the song of the Lorelei, and you too, will be won to delicious repose.

“ But thou, who didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread
A softness still and holy:
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

“ The vapors linger round the height ;
They meet—and soon must vanish :
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine,—
Sad thought, which I would banish,
But that I know, where'er I go,
Thy genuine image, Yarrow,
Will dwell with me,—to heighten Joy
And cheer my mind in Sorrow.”



NIAGARA.

F



V.

NIAGARA.



AUGUST.

THE rapids before Niagara are not of water only. The cataract is the centre of a vortex of travel—a Maelström which you scarcely suspect until you are swimming round in its intense swiftness and feel that you are drawn nearer and closer, every moment, to an awful and unimagined presence.

The summer-bird of a traveller who skims up the Hudson dippingly, wending Niagara-ward, if he has never seen the Falls, and has heard of them all his life, loiters along his way, quite unimpressed by the anticipation of his bourne, whose image has lost much of its grandeur in his mind by the household familiarity of the name. It is somewhat so with Switzerland after a residence in Europe. You approach half languidly, more than half suspicious that the fixed stare of the world has melted the glaciers, and the snow sifted along

inaccessible, rocky crevices, or at least has sadly stained them, and that even the Alps have been lionized into littleness. But some choice evening, as if the earth had suddenly bared her bosom to the glowing kiss of the dying day, you behold from Berne or Zurich the austere purity of the snow-Alps, incredibly lofty, majestic, and awful, and the worship of remembrance is, for ever after, living and profound.

So I came sauntering along through Western New-York, (sauntering by steam!—and yet the mind may loiter, may remain fast and firm behind, although the body flies,) and turned aside with my Presidential Antinous at Trenton, nor once paused to listen through its graceful whisper for the regal voice beyond. In the ravine of Trenton you meet some chance friend returning from the great Cataract, and sit with him upon the softest rock, where you can well watch the beautiful amber-fall the while, and curiously compare, at the last moment, your own fancies, with the Daguerrean exactness of his fresh impression. But after all, it is only curiously. You dream and wonder vaguely, and comparisons are constantly baffled by the syren singing of the falling waters which will have no divided love. Allured by the beauty in whose lap you lie, your friend's present praises are much clearer and more intelligible than his remembered raptures.

Such a friend I met and we discussed Niagara. But

as he told his story, I was placing the stairs here and towers there, about the rocks; and the great sheet and the little sheet were before us; and Goat Island smiled greenly in the bold, beautiful bank, which, like a verdured terrace, hung toward the stream from an enchanted palace in the Pines; and when the tale was told, I had a very pleasant, if somewhat incongruous, fancy of Niagara as a kind of sublimed Trenton.

And still, with memory clinging to the amber skirts of Trenton, I rushed along on a day that veiled the outline of the landscape with scudding gusts of mist, through the most classical of all American regions—through Rome, and Manlius, and Syracuse, and Camillus, and Marcellus; ruthlessly on, through Waterloo, Geneva, East Vienna, Rochester, Cold Water, Chili, (natural neighbours!) Byron, Attica, and Darien; then drew breath enough to wonder, that with such wealth of names inherited from the Indians, we so tenaciously cling to the glories of old fames to cover the nakedness of our newness; and saw, at the same moment, that we had left classicality, that we had overtaken a name peculiar to our continent, and had arrived at Buffalo!

Why not Bison, Ox, or Wild Horse? And this, too, with the waves breaking along the shore of Lake Ontario not far away, a majestic and melodious Indian name, hitherto unappropriated to a city. No wonder that the Buffalo sky thundered and lightened all night

from sheer vexation at its loss. I awoke at midnight to the music of a serenade that was vainly striving to soothe the tempest, and later, the angry clash of fire-bells stormed against the storm. But it was not comforted or subdued. Still in the lull of the music, and the pauses of the bells, I heard it muttering and moaning as it glared: "I, that am Buffalo, might have been Ontario."

But the storm wept itself away, and I awoke at morning to find myself upon the verge of the interest and excitement which immediately precedes all great events. All the previous day I had smiled rather loftily at the idea of excitement in approaching Niagara; but when my luggage was checked, and I bought a ticket for "Niagara Falls," and stepping into the cars, knew that I should not alight until I heard the roar and saw the spray of the cataract; then the sense of its grandeur, of its unique sublimity, which I perfectly knew, though I had never seen, came down upon me, and smote me suddenly with awe—as when a man who has loitered idly to St. Peter's, grasps the leathern curtain to push it aside, that he may behold the magnificence whose remembered lustre shall illuminate every year of his life.

It is remarkable that the anti-romance of a railroad is a mere prejudice. The straight lines piercing the rounding landscape are essentially poetic, and the

fervid desire of sight and possession which fires the mind upon approaching beloved or famous places and persons, takes adequate form in the steam-speed of a train which, straight as thought and swift as hope, cleaves the country to the single point. In the wild woods we do not insist upon the prosaic character of the railroad, because we wish to hurry through; and no one, I believe, not even the poets, sigh for the good old times of staging from Albany to Niagara.

But, in Europe, in lands of traditional romance, it appears at first very differently. A railroad to Venice! "Heaven forefend!" said I, as I lumbered easily out of Florence in a vettura, comfortably accomplishing its thirty miles a day. "Heaven forefend!" said I still, as we climbed the Apennines, and descending, rolled into quaint arcaded Bologna, and listened beneath Raphael's St. Cecilia, to hear if no spirit of a sound trembled from the harp-strings. "Heaven forefend!" said I still, as we jogged along the Lombard post-roads, green and golden, and glittering with the swaying of vines in the languid wind, hanging from the grave, stiff old poplars, like beautiful, winning, bewildering arms of loveliness, caressing whole perspectives of solemn Quaker papas, and festooning the road as if the Summer were a festival of Bacchus, and a jolly rout of Bacchanals had but now reeled along to the vintage. "Heaven forefend!" said I, as we tramped through

the ~~same~~ ~~stress~~ of ~~Verona~~, ~~nothing~~ ~~uncertain~~ ~~comes~~ ~~from~~ ~~Verona~~, ~~and~~ ~~utterly~~ ~~inconceivable~~ ~~of~~ ~~Bacon's~~ ~~fall~~ ~~of~~ ~~single~~ ~~minutes~~ ~~before~~ ~~and~~ ~~still~~. "Heaven forbid!" said I as I to the ~~more~~ ~~lovely~~ ~~cathedral~~ ~~of~~ ~~St. Mark's~~, we ~~minuted~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~evening~~ ~~Corso~~, and ~~opening~~ ~~our~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~University~~ ~~of~~ ~~Padua~~, ~~alighted~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~hotel~~, ~~thirty~~ ~~or~~ ~~thirty~~ ~~miles~~ ~~from~~ ~~Venice~~. But when the next morning I opened my eyes, and, ~~awakening~~ ~~the~~ ~~end~~ ~~of~~ ~~dreams~~, said to myself: "You are thirty miles from Venice." I sprang up like one whose marriage-morn has dawned, and cried aloud: "Thank God, there is a railroad to Venice!"

Nor could the speed of that railroad more than figure the eagerness of my desire, as it swept us through the vineyards. Nor did the dream of Venice fade, but deepen rather, for the strange contrast of that wild speed, and its eternal, romantic rest.

I had the same eagerness in stepping upon the cars at Buffalo. Within a certain circumference every body is Niagarized, and flies in a frenzy to the centre, as filings to the magnet. Before the train stopped, and while I fancied that we were slackening speed for a way-station—I, listening the while to the pleasant music of words, that weaned my hearing from any roar of waters—a crowd of men leaped from the cars, and ran like thieves, lovers, soldiers, or what you will, "to the Cataract," as the conductor said. I looked upon

them at once as a select party of poets, overwhelmed by the enthusiastic desire to see the Falls. It was an error: they were "knowing ones," intent upon the first choice of rooms at the "Cataract House." I followed them, and found a *queue*, as at the box-office of the opera in Paris—a long train of travellers waiting to enter their names. Not one could have a room yet (it was ten o'clock); but at half-past two every body was going away, and then every body could be accomodated.

And meanwhile?

Meanwhile,—Niagara.

Disappointment in Niagara seems to be affected or childish. Your fancies may be very different, but the regal reality sweeps them away like weeds and dreams. You may have nourished some impossible idea of one ocean pouring itself over a precipice into another. But it was a wild whim of inexperience, and is in a moment forgotten. If, standing upon the bridge as you cross to Goat Island, you can watch the wild sweep and swirl of the waters around the wooded point above, dashing, swelling and raging, but awful from the inevitable and resistless rush, and not feel that your fancy of a sea is paled by the chaos of wild water that tumbles toward you, then you are a child, and the forms of your thought are not precise enough

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delicate fingers, and smile to the headsman that his task is easy. And we, with kindred feeling, turn aside into the shop of Indian curiosities and play with Niagara, treating it as a jester, as a Bayadere, to await our pleasure.

Then, through the woods on Goat Island—solemn and stately woods—how slowly you will walk, again, and how silently! Ten years ago, your friend carved his name on some tree there, and Niagara must now wait until he finds it, swollen and shapeless with time. You saunter on. It is not a sunny day. It is cloudy, but the light is moist and rich, and when you emerge upon the quiet green path that skirts the English rapids, the sense of life in the waters—the water as a symbol of life and human passion—fills your mind. Certainly no other water in the world is watched with such anxiety, with such sympathy. The helplessness of its frenzied sweep saddens your heart. It is dark, fateful, foreboding. At times, as if a wild despair had seized it and rent it, it seethes and struggles and dashes foam-like into the air. Not with kindred passion do you regard it, but sadly, with folded hands of resignation, as you watch the death-struggles of a hero. It sweeps away as you look, dark and cold, and curling; and the seething you saw, before your thought is shaped, is an eddy of foam in the Niagara River below.

As yet you have not seen the Fall. You are coming with its waters, and are at its level. But groups of persons, sitting upon yonder point, which we see through the trees, are looking at the Cataract. We do not pause for them; we run now, down the path, along the bridges, into the Tower, and lean far over where the spray cools our faces. The living water of the rapids moves to its fall, as if torpid with terror; and the river that we saw, in one vast volume now swooms over the parapet, and makes Niagara. It is not all stricken into foam as it falls, but the densest mass is smooth, and almost of livid green.

Yet, even as it plunges, see how curls of spray exude from the very substance of the mass, airy, sparkling, and wreathing into mist,—emblems of the water's resurrection into summer clouds. Looking over into the abyss, we behold nothing below, we hear only a slow, constant thunder; and, bewildered in the mist, dream that the Cataract has cloven the earth to its centre, and that, pouring its waters into the fervent inner heat, they hiss into spray, and overhang the fated Fall, the sweat of its agony.

NIAGARA, AGAIN.

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VI.

NIAGARA, AGAIN.



AUGUST.

" Arethusa arose
 From her couch of snows
 In the Acroceraunian mountains—
 From cloud and from crag
 And many a jag
 Shepherding her bright fountains,
 She leapt down the rocks,
 With her rainbow locks
 Streaming among the streams ;
 Her steps paved with green
 The downward ravine
 Which slopes to the western gleams ;
 And gliding and springing
 She went ever singing
 In murmurs as soft as sleep :
 The earth seemed to love her,
 And heaven smiled above her
 As she lingered toward the deep."

SHELLEY would wonder, could he know that these
 lines of his were quoted at Niagara. But Niagara is

no less beautiful than sublime, although I do not remember to have heard much of its beauty. It even suggests the personal feeling implied in such verses, and which, at a distance, seems utterly incompatible with the grandeur of the spot.

Nature has her partialities for places as well as persons, and as she thrones the Goethean or Websterian intellect upon "the front of Jove himself," so she is quite sure to adorn the feet of her snowy Alps with the lustrous green of vineyards, the stately shade of chesnuts, or with the undulating sweep of lawn-like pastures. Here at Niagara she enamels the cliffs with delicate verdure, and the luminous gloom of the wood upon Goat Island invites to meditation with cathedral solemnity.

Nothing struck me more than the ease of access to the very verge of the Cataract. Upon the narrow point between the large and small American Falls you may sit upon the soft bank on a tranquil afternoon, dabbling your feet in the swiftly slipping water, reading the most dreamy of romances, and soothed by the huge roar, as if you were the Vicegerent of the Prophet, and the flow of the cool, smooth river, but the constant caressing of troops of slaves; and the roar of the Cataract but hushed voices singing their lord to sleep.

But if in your reading you pause, or if the low ripple of talk subsides, in which your soul was laved as your



frame in the gurgling freshness of wood-streams, and your eyes are left charmed upon the current—or if your dream dissolves and you behold the water, its own fascination is not less than that of the romance. It flows so tranquilly, is so unimpatient of the mighty plunge, that it woos and woos you to lay your head upon its breast and slide into dreamless sleep.

“ Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time,
 I have been half in love with easeful death—
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme
 To take into the air my quiet breath :
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy !
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain
 To thy high requiem a sod.”

So sang Keats to the nightingale which sang to him ; and whoever was really so enamoured could ill resist the seduction of the stream at the Falls. For in its might subsides all fear. It is a force so resistless, that it would need only a slight step, the merest overture of your will. If Niagara were in France, I am confident the Frenchmen would make suicide pic-nics to the Cataract. Unhappy lovers would take express trains and their “ quietus make ” where their dirge would be endless. The French, of course, would add

the melodramatic character of such an ending to its intrinsic charms, and even John Bull might forego the satisfaction of a leap from the Duke of York's column for a Niagaran annihilation.

As you sit, chatting and wondering, upon the bench at this point, you are sure to hear the sad romance of two years since. A young man caught up a child, and swung it to and fro over the water, only a few feet from the precipice, laughing gaily and feigning fright, when suddenly the child sprang from his arms into the rapid. He stepped in instantly, for the water near the shore is not more than two feet deep, and caught her again in his arms. But the treacherous stones at the bottom were so slippery with the constant action of the water, that, although he could resist the force of the stream, he could not maintain his foothold, and was swept with the child in his arms, and his betrothed mistress watching him from the bank, directly over the Fall. The man who told me the story was a musician, and had still a low tone of horror in his voice; for he said that as the young man came to the Point he told him there was to be a dance that evening and that he must have his music ready. They had scarcely parted, his words were yet ringing in his ears, when he heard a curdling shriek of terror, and knew that "somebody had gone over the Falls."

Niagara has but one interest, and that absorbs all

attention. The country around is entirely level, and covered with woods and grain fields. It is very thinly populated; civilization seems to have made small inroad upon the primeval grandeur of the spot. Standing upon the western end of Goat Island, and looking up the stream, the wooded banks stare back upon you as in a savage silence of folded arms and scornful eyes. They are not fair woods, but dark forests. They smite you only with a sense of magnificent space, as I fancy the impression of rocky mountain scenery, but which is akin to that of chaos.

From the spot where stood the young English hermit's cottage, upon Goat Island, you front the Canada shore. But the name dies along your mind almost without echo, even as your voice might call into those dark forests, but melt from them no human response. Canada! The name is a mist in the mind. Slowly and vaguely a few remembrances shape themselves. Shadowy and terrible traditions of hopeless and heartless Indian wars, which tapped the choicest veins of French and English blood, but gave no glory in return, half tell themselves in the mind, like the crouching of a beldame in the chimney corner.

Slowly from the red mist of that vague remembrance rise the names of Wolfe and Montgomery and Montcalm, heroes where heroism little availed, for the Indian element mingled in the story, and where the

Indian is, there nobility and chivalry are not. You look across the rapids upon a country which has made no mark in history; where few men love to live, except those who have little choice; where the towns are stagnant and few; upon a country whose son no man is proud to be, and the barrenness of the impression somewhat colours your feelings of Niagara, for the American shore is wild too, although the zealous activity of the little village at the Falls, and the white neatness of Lewistown, below, relieve the sense of desolation upon the distant banks.

The beauty of Niagara is in its immediate neighbourhood. It is upon Goat Island—upon the cliffs, over which hangs the greatest verdure—in the trees that lean out and against the rapids, as if the forest were enamoured of the waters; and which overhang and dip, suffering their youngest and softest leaves to thrill in the trembling frenzy of the touch of Niagara. It is in the vivid contrast of the repose of lofty trees and the whirl of a living river—and in the contrast, more singular and subtle, of twinkling, shimmering leaves, and the same magnificent madness. It is in the profuse and splendid play of colours in and around the Cataract, and in the thousand evanescent fancies which wreath its image in the mind as the sparkling vapour floats, a rainbow, around the reality. It is in the flowers that grow quietly along the edges of the

precipices, to the slightest of which, one drop of the clouds of spray that curl from the seething abyss is the sufficient elixir of a long and lovely life.

Yet—for we must look the Alpine comparison which is suggested to every one who knows Switzerland, fairly in the face—the Alps are more terrible than Niagara. The movement and roar of the Cataract, and the facility of approach to the very plunge, relieve the crushing sense of awfulness which the silent, inaccessible, deadly solitudes of the high Alps inspire. The roar of an avalanche heard in those solemn neights, because beginning often and ending beyond the point that human feet may ever tread, is a sound of dread and awe like that of the mysterious movement of another world, heard through the silence of our own.

Besides, where trees grow, there human sympathy lingers. Doubtless it is the supreme beauty of the edges of Niagara which often causes travellers to fancy that they are disappointed, as if in Semiramis they should see more of the woman than of the queen. But, climbing the Alps, you leave trees below. They shrink and retire; they lose their bloom and beauty; they decline from tenderness into toughness; from delicate, shifting hues, into sombre evergreen—darker and more solemn, until they are almost black, until they are dwarfed and scant and wretched, and are

TOUR-BATING.

With the trees, you leave the
and sentiment of life. The Alpine
edge of creation, half blest with
for ever, in the midst of
of the world, antediluvian silence
and the curse of an antediluvian on a soli-
tarily in the soul. Painfully climbing toward
you may feel, with the fascination of
as the Chinese say,
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Niagara is life; and
is the more terrible. It is a life,
you are to observe in many ways—
from the sides, from the
and, finally, you must steam up to
and then climb down behind it.

These two latter excursions are by no means to be
omitted. The little steamer leaves the shore by the
and, guiding with effort into the
current of the river, you remember that there is the
Cataract before, and the whirlpool behind, and sheer
rocky precipices on each side. But there is only gay
and pleasant wonder all around you, the
is mild, and the Falls flash like a plunge of
white flame. Slowly, slowly, tugs the little boat
against the stream. She hugs the shore, rocky-
haunted, stiff, straight, prim old puritan of a shore

that it is, although it is wreathed and crowned with graceful foliage.

Presently comes a puff of cool spray. Is it a threat, a kiss, or a warning from our terrible bourne? The fussy little captain exhorts every body to wrap in a waterproof cloak and cap; we shall else be soaked through and through, as we were never soaked by shower before. But some of us, beautiful daughters of a mother famously fair, love our looks, and would fain enjoy everything without making ourselves less lovely.

“Pooh, pooh!” insists our captain, “I wouldn’t give three cents for them ’ere bunnets, (our choice travelling hats!) if they once get wet.”

So we consent to cloaks, but we positively decline India-rubber caps, especially after an advance to six cents by a gallant friend upon the captain’s bid for our “bunnets.” The men must shift for themselves. Here we are, in the roar, and the rush, and the spray. Whew! it drives, it sweeps, and the steady thunder of the Cataract booms, cramming the air with sound. Only a few of us hold the upper deck. Nor are we, who have no mantles, all unprotected, for shawls wont to protect flowers from the summer wind, now shield us from the spray of Niagara.

We sweep along upon our leaf, which quivers and skims the foam—sweep straight into the blinding white, thick, suffocating mist of the Cataract,—strain

our eyes, as we gasp, for the curve of the Fall, for the parapet above,—and in a sudden break of the cloud, through which breathes cold the very air of the rush of waters, we catch a glorious glimpse of a calm ocean pouring white and resistless from the blue sky above into the white clouds below, and behold the very image of that Mind's process whose might—

“ Moves on
His undisturbed affairs.”

I glance backward upon the deck, which is raked by the scudding gusts of spray, and see a line of wet men crouching together, like a group of Esquimaux, with their faces upturned toward the Fall. They sit motionless, and staring, and appalled, like a troop in Dante's Inferno. But straight before us—good Heaven! pilot, close under the bow there, looming through the mist! Are you blind? are you mad? or does the Cataract mock our feeble power, and will claim its victims? A black rock, ambushed in the surge and spray, lowers before us. We are driving straight upon it; we all see it, but we do not speak. We fancy that the boat will not obey—that the due fate will reward this terrific trifling. Straight before us, a boat's length away, and lo! swerving with the current around the rock, on and farther, with felicitous daring, the little “Maid of the Mist” dances up to the very foot of the

Falls, wrapping herself saucily in the rainbow robe of its own mist. There we tremble, in perfect security, mocking with our little Maid the might of Niagara. For man is the magician, and as he plants his foot upon the neck of mountains, and passes the awful Alps, safely as the Israelites through the divided sea, so he dips his hand into Niagara, and gathering a few drops from its waters, educes a force from Niagara itself, by which he confronts and defies it. The very water which as steam was moving us to the Cataract, had plunged over it as spray a few hours before.

Or go, some bright morning down the Biddle staircase, and creeping along under the cliff, change your dress at the little house by the separate sheet of the American Fall. The change made, we shall reappear like exhausted firemen, or Swampscot fishermen. Some of us will not insist upon our "bunnets," but will lay them aside, and join the dilapidated firemen and fishermen outside the house, as Bloomerized Undines, mermaids, or naiads. A few descending steps of rock, and we have reached the perpendicular wooden staircase that leads under the Fall. Do not stop; do not pause to look affrighted down into that whirring cauldron of cold mist, where the winds dart, blinding, in arrowy gusts. Now we see the platform across the bottom—now a cloud of mist blots it out. And it roars so.

Come, fishermen, mermaids, naiads, firemen and

your daring is untamed, you may climb over slippery rocks in the blinding mist and the deafening roar, and feel yourself as far under the Great American Fall as human foot may venture.

I must stop. If you have been at Niagara, what I have written may recall it, but can hardly paint, except to remembrance, the austere grandeur and dreamy beauties which are its characteristics. Your few days there are days upon the river bank, walking and wondering. Your frail fancies of it are swallowed up as they rise, like chance flowers flung upon its current. Many a man to whom Niagara has been a hope, and an inspiration, and who has stood before its majesty awe-stricken and hushed, secretly wonders that its words describing it are not pictures and poems. But any great natural object—a cataract, an Alp, a storm at sea—are seed too vast for any sudden flowering. They lie in experience moulding life. At length the pure peaks of noble aims and the broad flow of a generous manhood betray that in some happy hour of youth you have seen the Alps and Niagara.



SARATOGA.



VII.

SARATOGA.



“ Wilt thou be a nun, Sophie ?
Nothing but a nun ?
Is it not a better thing
With thy friends to laugh and sing ?
To be loved and sought ?
To be wooed and—won ?
Dost thou love the shadow, Sophie,
Better than the sun ?”

- AUGUST.

ROMANCE is the necessary association of watering-places, because they are the haunts of youth and beauty seeking pleasure. When on some opaline May-day you drive out from Naples to Baiæ, the Saratoga of old Rome, and in the golden light of the waning afternoon drink Falernian while you look upon the vineyards where it ripened for Horace, your fancy is thronged with the images of romance, and you could listen to

catch some echo of a long, silent love-song, lingering in the air.

It is a kind of sentimentality inseparable from the spot—a pensive reverie into which few men are loth to fall; for its atmosphere is “the light that never was on sea or land.” Yet romance, like a ghost, eludes touching. It is always where you were, not where you are. The interview or the conversation was prose at the time, but it is poetry in memory.

Thus persons of poetic feeling speak of people and events as if they were the figures of a romance, and are laughed at for seeing everything through their imagination. But why is it not as pleasant to see through imagination as through scepticism? Why, because people are bad, should I be faithless of the virtue of a beautiful woman?

Life is the best thing we can possibly make of it. I sit dull and dismal and heavy, if a man loses his temper; it is glowing with promise and satisfaction, if he is not ashamed of his emotions. Young America is very anxious to be a man of the world. He has heard that in England a gentleman is a being of sublime indifference, who has exhausted all varieties of experience—who has, in fact, opened the oyster of the world. So Young America cultivates nonchalance with the ladies, and cannot help it if he does know everything that is worth knowing. To every man of thought

and perception he is the travestie of a man, whose social life is an injustice and an insult to every woman.

He does not see that indifference is satiety—that it is the weakness of a man whom circumstances have mastered, and not the sensitive calmness, like a lake's surface, of profound and digested experience. What is the charm of a belle but her purely natural manners? And they are charming, not in themselves, but because they harmonize with her nature and character. Yet if another person imitates her manners in the hope of being a belle, the result is at once ludicrous and painful.

But such musings, however suggested by the place, I fancy you will consider barren as the sand in which Saratoga lies.

The romance of a watering-place, like other romance, always seems past when you are there. Here at Saratoga, when the last polka is polked, and the last light in the ball-room is extinguished, you saunter along the great piazza, with the "good night" of beauty yet trembling upon your lips, and meet some old habitu , or even a group of them, smoking in lonely arm-chairs, and meditating the days departed.

The great court is dark and still. The waning moon is rising beyond the trees, but does not yet draw their shadows, moonlight-mosaics, upon the lawn. There are no mysterious couples moving in the garden, not

a solitary foot-fall upon the piazza. A few lanterns burn dimly about the doors, and the light yet lingering in a lofty chamber reminds you that some form, whose grace this evening has made memory a festival, is robing itself for dreams.

If courtly Edmund Waller were with you, it would not be hard to tempt him to step with you across the court to serenade under that window, with the most musical and genuine of his verses.

“ Go, lovely Rose !
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that’s young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired ;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die ! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee—
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.”

He not being at Saratoga this year you are content with looking across the court and remembering his song. The moonlight softens your heart as did the golden days at Baiæ. You, too, seat yourself in a lonely arm-chair, and your reveries harmonize with the melancholy minor of the old habitué's reflections. You speak to him musingly of the "lovely Rose" who wastes her time and you.

"Yes," he responds, "but you should have seen Saratoga in her mother's days."

And while the moon rides higher, and pales from the yellow of her rising into a watery lustre, you hear stories of blooming belles, who are grandmothers now, and of brilliant beaux, bald now and gouty. These midnight gossips are very mournful. They will not suffer you to leave those whose farewells yet thrill your heart, in the eternal morning of youth, but compel you to forecast their doom, to draw sad and strange outlines upon the future—to paint pictures of age, wrinkles, ochre-veined hands, and mob-caps—until your Saratoga episode of pleasure has sombred into an Egyptian banquet, with your old, silently-smoking, and meditative habitué for the death's-head.

Nor is it strange that you should then repeat to him Charles Lamb's "Gipsy's Malison," with its fantastic, Egyptian-like sternness.

“ Suck, baby, suck ; mother’s love grows by giving ;
 Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting ;
 Black manhood comes, when riotous, guilty living
 Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.

Kiss, baby, kiss ; mother’s lips shine by kisses ;
 Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings ;
 Black manhood comes, when turbulent, guilty blisses,
 Tends thee the kiss that poisons mid caressings.

Hang, baby, hang ; mother’s love loves such forces ;
 Shame the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging.
 Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
 Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging.”

In fact, after a few such midnights, even the morning sunshine cannot melt away this Egyptian character from the old habitués. As you cross the court, after breakfast, to the bowling alley, with a bevy so young and lovely, that age and mob-caps seem only fantastic visions of dyspepsia, and of hearts that were never young, you will see them sitting, a solemn reality of “ black manhood,” along the Western Piazza, leaning back in arm-chairs, smoking perhaps, chatting of stocks possibly,—a little rounded in the shoulders, holding canes which are no longer foppish switches, but substantial and serious supports. They are the sub-bass in the various-voiced song, the prosaic notes to the pleasant lyric of Saratoga life.

They are not really thinking of stocks, nor are they very conscious of the flavour of their cigars, but they

watch the scene as they would dream a dream. As the sound of young voices pulses toward them on the morning air, as they watch the flitting forms, the cool morning-dresses, the gush of youth overflowing the sunny and shady paths of the garden, they are old habitués no longer; they are those gentlemen, gallant and gay, dancing in the warm light of bright eyes toward a future gorgeous as a sunset, gossiping humorously or seriously, according as the light of eyes is sunshine or moonlight; and it is themselves as they were with their own parties, their own loves, jealousies and scandals, moving briskly across the garden to the bowling-alley.

We pass,—butterflies of this summer,—and the vision fades upon their eyes. It was only the image of dead days, only the Fata Morgana of the enchanted island they shall see no more, only the ghosts of grace and beauty, that witched the world for their youth.

“ The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that they have pressed
In their bloom,
And the names they loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.”

We stroll down the street to Congress Hall, we make a pilgrimage to the piazza, which was the Saratoga of our reading and romance—to Congress Hall, across

whose smooth-columned piazza we pass, to pay the tribute of our homage to the spot where so much love beat in warm hearts and blushed in beautiful cheeks. For when Saratoga was first fashionable, Congress Hall was the temple of fashion.

If you observe, while "we youth" (as Falstaff would say, were he an old habitu  ,) are grieving that the romance is gone, and are regretting its going to the companion of our promenade, and are sitting, meditative and melancholy, with the habitu  s at midnight, we are all the while, and therein, tasting quite as sparkling a draught of romance as ever our revered grandparents quaffed. And no sooner have the doors of the "United States" clanged awful upon our departure, than sad and sweet faces of remembrance look from all the windows, and in the young, feminine fancy, when Saratoga is once left behind, the great hotel stands shining like a transfigured palace of faery.

Be assured, Saratoga is still a golden-clasped, illuminated romance for summer reading. Young men still linger, loth to fly; and when the trunk must be packed, they yet sit gossiping upon the edge of the bed; and were you under it, you would hear how every Tom Thumb, or Prince Riquet with the Tuft, was the most chivalric and resistless of King Arthurs; what innumerable fair-haired Preciosas were wondering at the same wonderful Arthurs; and how many a Fa-

tima has been rescued, or at least was clearly ready to be rescued, from unpolking, stock-jobbing, mercantile old Blue Beards. Then, gorged with experience, blasé of the world, patronising and enduring life, the royal Arthurs, scorning the heaps of broken hearts they leave behind, transfer themselves and their boots to a new realm of conquest at Newport, and reduce the most impregnable heart with a well-directed Redowa, or a fatally fascinating Schottische.

But while we laugh at Saratoga, its dancing, dressing, and flirtation, it is yet a "coign of vantage" for an observing eye. It is not all dress and dancing. Like every aspect of life, and like most persons, it is a hint and suggestion of something high and poetic. It is an oasis of repose in the desert of our American hurry. Life is leisurely there, and buiness is amusement.

It is perpetual festival. The "United States" is the nearest hit we Americans can make to Bocaccio's garden. It is a spacious house, admirably kept, with a stately piazza surrounding a smooth green lawn, constantly close shaven, and shadowed with lofty trees. Along that stately piazza we pass to the ball-room, and cross that lawn under those trees to the bowling-alley, and the place of spirits. We rise and breakfast at any time. Then we chat a little and bowl till noon. If you choose, you may sit apart and converse, instead of bowling, upon metaphysics and morals. At noon we

must return to the parlour and practise the polka which we have not danced since yesterday midnight. There are sofas and comfortable chairs strewn around the room, and, if you have reached no metaphysical conclusion in the bowling-alley, you may wish to continue your chat. We ladies must go shopping after the polka, and we mere men may go to the bath. Dinner then, in our semi-toilettes, seeing Ambrose and Anthony to get us something to eat, and watching the mighty Morris, in an endless frenzy of excitement, tearing his hair, whenever a plate, loud-crashing, shivers on the floor.

After dinner the band plays upon the lawn, and we all promenade upon the piazza, or in the walks of the court, or sit at the parlour-windows. We discuss the new arrivals. We criticise dresses, and styles, and manners. We discriminate the arctic and antarctic Bostonians, fair, still, and stately, with a vein of scorn in their Saratoga enjoyment, and the languid, cordial, and careless Southerners, far from precise in dress or style, but balmy in manner as a bland Southern morning. We mark the crisp courtesy of the New-Yorker, elegant in dress, exclusive in association, a pallid ghost of Paris—without its easy elegance, its *bonhomme*, its gracious *savoir faire*, without the *spirituel* sparkle of its conversation, and its natural and elastic grace of style. We find that a Parisian toilette is not France,

nor grace, nor fascination. We discover that exclusiveness is not elegance.

But while we mark and moralize, the last strain of Lucia or Ernani has died away, and it is five o'clock. A crowd of carriages throng the street before the door; there is a flutter through the hall, a tripping up and down stairs, and we are bowling along to the lake. There is but one drive: everybody goes to the lake. And no sooner have we turned by the Congress Spring, than we are in the depths of the country, in a long, level reach of pines, with a few distant hills of the Green Mountains rolling along the horizon. It is a city gala at the hotel, but the five minutes were magical, and among the pines upon the road we remember the city and its life as a winter dream.

The vivid and sudden contrast of this little drive with the hotel, is one of the pleasantest points of Saratoga life. In the excitement of the day, it is like stepping out on summer evenings from the glaring ball-room upon the cool and still piazza.

There is a range of carriages at the lake. A select party is dining upon those choice trout, black bass, and young woodcock; various other select parties are scattered about upon the banks or on the piazza, watching the sails and sipping cobbles. The descent to the lake is very steep, and the smooth water is dotted with a few boats gliding under the low, mono-

tonous banks. The afternoon is tranquil, the light is tender, the air is soft, and the lapping of the water upon the pebbly shore is haply not so musical as words spoken upon its surface.

In the sunset we bowl back again to the hotel. I saw most autumnal sunsets at Saratoga, cold and brilliant, like the splendour of October woods. They were still and solemn over the purple hills of the horizon, and their light looked strangely in at the windows of the hotel. Many a belle, just arrived from the drive and about to consider the evening's dressing, paused a moment at the window, stood resplendent in that dying light, and a shade of melancholy touched her lithe fancies, as a cloud dims the waving of golden grain. Who had stood there to dress for a Saratoga ball, years ago? Who should stand there, dressing, years to come? This Saratoga, dreamed of, wondered at, longed for—where to be a belle was the flower of human felicity—whose walks, drives, hops, moonlight talks and mornings should be the supreme satisfaction—had it fulfilled its promise?

This moment, not Waller should speak to her, but Wordsworth, with pensive music :—

“ Look at the fate of summer flowers,
Which blow at daybreak, droop ere evensong ;
And, grieved for their brief date, confess that ours
Measured by what we are and ought to be,
Measured by all that, trembling, we foresee,
Is not so long !

If human life do pass away,
 Perishing, yet more swiftly than the flower,
 Whose frail existence is but of a day ;
 What space hath virgin's beauty to disclose
 Her sweets, and triumph o'er the breathing rose,
 Not even an hour !

The deepest grove whose foliage hid
 The happiest lovers Arcady might boast,
 Could not the entrance of this thought forbid :
 O be thou wise as they, soul-gifted maid !
 Nor rate too high what must so quickly fade,
 So soon be lost !

Then shall Love teach some virtuous youth
 ' To draw out of the object of his eyes'
 The whilst on thee they gaze in simple truth,
 Hues more exalted, ' a refined form,'
 That dreads not age, nor suffers from the worm,
 And never dies !''

She comes at last. The sun has set, and with it those weird fancies, those vague thoughts that streamed shapelessly through her mind like these long, sad vapours through the twilight sky, Nor, for that moment, is the belle less gay, though more beautiful, nor is Saratoga less charming.

Music flows towards us from the ball-room in languid, luxurious measures, like warm, voluptuous arms wreathing around us and drawing us to the dance.

When we enter the hall we find very few people, but at the lower end a sprinkling of New-Yorklings are in their heaven.

Dancing is natural and lovely as singing. The court of youth and beauty, with the presence of brilliantly dressed women, and an air smoothed and softened with delicate and penetrating perfumes, and the dazzling splendour of lights, is a song unsung, a flower not blossomed, until you mingle in movement with the strain, until the scene is so measured by the music, that they become one. This has been said so finely by De Quincey that I cannot refrain from enriching my pages with the quotation :

“ And in itself, of all the scenes which this world offers, none is to me so profoundly interesting, none (I say deliberately) so affecting, as the spectacle of men and women floating through the mazes of a dance; under these conditions, however, that the music shall be rich and festal, the execution of the dancers perfect, and the dance itself of a character to admit of free, fluent, and continuous motion. And whenever the music happens to be not of a light, trivial character, but charged with the spirit of festal pleasure, and the performers in the dance so far skilful as to betray no awkwardness verging on the ludicrous, I believe that many persons feel as I feel in such circumstances, viz. :



derive from the spectacle the very grandest form of passionate sadness which can belong to any spectacle whatsoever.

“ From all which the reader may comprehend, if he should not happen experimentally to have felt, that a spectacle of young men and women *flowing* through the mazes of an intricate dance, under a full volume of music, taken with all the circumstantial adjuncts of such a scene in rich men's halls, the blaze of lights and jewels, the light, the motion, the sea-like undulation of heads, the interweaving of the figures, the *anakuklosis*, or self-revolving, both of the dance and the music; never ending, still beginning, and the continual regeneration of order from a system of motions which seem for ever to approach the very brink of confusion; that such a spectacle, with such circumstances, may happen to be capable of exciting and sustaining the very grandest emotions of philosophic melancholy to which the human spirit is open. The reason is in part that such a scene presents a sort of mask of human life, with its whole equipage of pomps and glories, its luxuries of sight and sound, its hours of golden youth, and the interminable revolution of ages hurrying after ages, and one generation treading over the flying footsteps of another, whilst all the while the overruling music attempts the mind to the spectacle, the subject (as a German would say) to the object, the beholder to the

vision. And although this is known to be but one phase of life—of life culminating and in ascent—yet the other and repulsive phasis is concealed upon the hidden or averted side of the golden arras, known but not felt—or is seen but dimly in the rear, crowding into indistinct proportions. The effect of the music is to place the mind in a state of elective-attraction for everything in harmony with its own prevailing key.”

I do not know how far others will acknowledge the justice of this brilliant passage, but to me it gave a thrill of satisfaction, as the adequate statement of a frequent experience. The secret of the feeling is in the entire harmony of the music and the movement—it is that the dancing is the visible form of the infinite and subtle suggestions of the music. Who that has felt the extreme pathos of Strauss's waltzes, but has known them seem to the sensitive imagination, excited by the grace and beauty of woman and the odorous brilliancy of a thronged hall, passionate love-lyrics? Nor will you be surprised, if you have been haunted by their sadness as you listened, and especially as you danced to them, to hear that the best are Bohemian and Hungarian songs, wrought into the form of a waltz, the national songs of all people being always in a minor key.

This is a day at Saratoga, and all days there. It is a place for pleasure. The original aim of a visit

thither, to drink the waters, is now mainly the excuse of fathers and of the habitués, to whom, however, summer and Saratoga are synonymous. It is our pleasant social exchange. There we step out of the worn and weary ruts of city society, and mingle in a broad field of various acquaintance. There we may scent the fairest flowers of the South and behold the beauty which is ours, of which we have a right to be proud in Italy and Spain, but which is really less familiar to most of us Northerners than Spanish or Italian beauty. There, too, men mingle and learn from contact and sympathy a sweeter temper and a more catholic consideration, so that the summer flowers we went to wreath may prove, not the garland of an hour, but the firmly-linked chain of an enduring union.


If you seek health, avoid it if you can; or if you must drink the waters there, take rooms in some other house, not in the "United States," where you will be tortured with the constant vision of the carnival of the high health you have lost. Youth, health and beauty are still the trinity of Saratoga. No old belle ever returns. No girl, who was beautiful and famous there, comes as a grandmother to that gay haunt. The ghosts of her blooming days would dance a direful dance around her in the moonlight of the court. Faces

that grew sad and cold, and changed, would look in at her midnight window. Phantoms of promenades, when the wish was spoken rather than the feeling, would make her shudder as she hurried along the piazza. The dull aching sense of youth, passed for ever, would become suddenly poignant, as she glanced upon the gay groups, gay as she was gay, young and fair no more than she had been. Worst of all, if in some lonely path she met, gray-haired, dull-eyed, and tottering upon crutches, the handsome and graceful partner of her first Saratoga season.

You will not linger long. A week with Calypso is all that a wise Telemachus will allow himself. But he will not be unjust to its character nor deem it all folly. And if, after dinner, you walk slowly through the garden, with Robert Herrick, toward the railroad, by the music and the groups who listen to it, he watching their youth and beauty, will say to them in farewell, as he did :

TO BLOSSOMS.

“ Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast ?
Your date is not so past
But you may stay yet here awhile
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.



What! were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good night?
'Twas pity nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth,
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, tho' ne'er so brave;
And after they have shown their pride
Like you, awhile, they slide
Into the grave."

LAKE GEORGE.

VIII.

LAKE GEORGE.



AUGUST.

AN hour upon the railroad brings you from Saratoga to the Moreau station. Here you climb a stage-coach to roll across the country to Lake George. It is a fine strip of landscape variously outlined, and with glimpses of beautiful distance. The driver pointed out to us the tree under which Jane McCrea was murdered by the Indians—a lovely spot, meet for so sad a tradition. Between us and the dim-rolling outline of the Green Mountains were the windings of the Hudson, which here, in its infancy, is a stream of fine promise, and rolled our fancies forward to its beautiful banks below, its dark highlands, its glassy reaches, and the forms of friends on lawns and in gardens along its shores.

We dined at Glen's Falls, which we visited. They are oppressed by the petty tyranny of a decayed dynasty of saw-mills, and the vexed river rages and tumbles among channeled rocks, making a fine spec-

tacle of the Trentonian character. Then we bowled along through a brilliant afternoon towards the lake. The road is one of the pleasantest I remember. And particularly on that day the grain-fields and the mountains were of the rarest delicacy of tone and texture. Through the trees, an hour from Glen's Falls, I saw a sheet of water, and we emerged upon a fine view of the lake.

An azure air, of which the water seemed only a part more palpable, set in hills of graceful figure and foliage, and studded with countless isles of romantic beauty—such a picture as imagination touches upon the transparent perfection of summer noons, was my fancy of Lake George.

It was but partly true.

Caldwell is a hamlet at the southern end of the lake. It is named from an eccentric gentleman (illiberal obstinacy is always posthumously beatified into eccentricity), who owned the whole region, built a hotel on the wrong spot, determined that no one else should build anywhere, and ardently desired that no more people should settle in the neighbourhood; and, in general, infested the southern shore with a success worthy of a mythological dragon. Instead, therefore, of a fine hotel at the extremity of the lake, commanding a view of its length, and situated in grounds properly picturesque, there is a house on one side of the

end looking across it to the opposite mountain, and for ever teasing the traveller with wonder that it stands where it does.

The hotel is kept admirably, however, and the faults of position and size are obviated, as far as possible, by the courtesy and ability of the host. But the increasing throng of travel justifies the erection of an inn equal in every manner to the best. This year the little hamlet was but the colony of the hotel; and a mile across the lake, on the opposite shore, was a small house for the accommodation of the public.

Lake George is a strange lull in excitement after Saratoga. Its tranquillity is like the morning after a ball. There is nothing to do but to bowl or to sit upon the piazza, or to go fishing upon the lake. It is a good place to study fancy fishermen, who have taken their piscatory degrees in Wall and Pearl Streets. Most of the visitors are guests of a night, but there are also pleasant parties who pass weeks upon the lake, and listen to the enthusiastic stories of Saratoga as incredulously as to syren-songs; to whom Saratoga is a name and a vapour, incredible as the fervour of a tropical day to the Russian empress in her icy palace; parties of a character rare in our country, who do not utterly surrender the summer to luxurious idleness, but steal honey from the flowers as they fly.

And if, strolling upon the piazza while the moon paves a quivering path across the water, along which throng enchanted recollections, a quiet voice asks if Como's self is more lovely, you are glad to say to one who understands it, your feelings of the differences between European and American scenery. We were watching the water from the piazza, over the low trees in the garden, when the Empress said to me, "Now is it not more beautiful than Como?" It was an unfortunate question, because the Lake of Como is the most beautiful lake the traveller sees, and because the details of comparisons were instantly forced upon my mind.

Lake George is a simple mountain-lake upon the verge of the wilderness. You ascend from its banks westward and plunge into a wild region. The hills that frame the water are low, and when not bare—for fires frequently consume many miles of woodland on the hill-sides—covered with the stiffly outlined, dark and cold foliage of evergreens. Among these are no signs of life. You might well fancy the populace of the primeval forest yet holding those retreats. You might still dream in the twilight that it were not impossible to catch the ring of a French or English rifle, or the wild whoop of the Indian; sure that the landscape you see was the same they saw and their remotest ancestors.

From the water rise the rocks, sometimes solitary and bearing a single tree, sometimes massed into a bowery island.

The boat-boys count the isles of the lake by the days of the year, and tell you of three hundred and sixty-five. It is a story agreeable enough to hear, but wearisome when the same thing is told at every pretty stretch of islanded water. In the late afternoon or by moonlight, it is pleasant to skim the quiet water to the little Tea Island which has a tree-sheltered cove for harbour and on which stands a ruined temple to T. But whether bohea, or gunpowder, or some more mysterious divinity, the boat-boys hesitate to say, and you must rely on fancy to suggest. I only know, that as we pushed aside the branches that overhang the cove and climbed to the island and the temple, we had no sooner set foot upon its floor, and gazed dreamily forth over the lake, which the moon enchanted, than the slow beat of oars pushed through the twilight, and directly across the moon-paved path of the water shot a skiff with female figures only.

The throb of oars approached, and singing voices mingled with the beat. The boat drove silently into the black shadow of the cove, the singing ceased, and a hushed tumult of low laughter trembled through the tree. For that moment I was a South-Sea Islander, a Typeean, a Herman Melville, and down the ruined

steps I ran to catch a moonlight glimpse of Fayaway, but saw only the rippling brilliance of the rapidly fading boat. Therefore I know not what forms they were, nor the moonlight mysteries of Lake George, nor of the little T Island,

“ What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape,
Of Deities, or Mortals, or of both.”

Another day we spread our sails, and flew four miles up the lake to Diamond Island. It has a little stony beach, on which crystals are found, and here also are ruins, but of nothing more stable than Robin Hood's temples. A faded bower, spacious enough for the pavilion of the loveliest May Queen, and romantic enough for a trap of Fancy to catch reveries, is the ruin of the island.

The brisk wind that blew us rapidly thither drooped as it passed the faded bower, and the lake lapped idly against the stones as we embarked for Caldwell. We drifted homewards in gusts and calms, while a flaming sunset streamed from behind the western mountains. It faded into pensive twilight, the very hour of Wordsworth's lines—

“ How richly glows the water's breast
Before us, tinged with evening's hues,
While, facing thus the crimson West,
The boat her silent course pursues,

And see how dark the backward stream,
A little moment past so smiling !
And still, perhaps, with faithless gleam,
Some other loiterers beguiling.

Such views the youthful bard allure,
But heedless of the following gloom,
He dreams their colours shall endure,
Till peace go with him to the tomb.
And let him nurse his fond deceit,
And what if he must die in sorrow,
Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,
Though grief and pain may come to-morrow."

All this was pleasant, but all this does not make a lake as beautiful as Como. Here, at Lake George, is no variety of foliage. The solemn evergreens emphasize the fact of a wild primeval landscape. Were there brilliant, full-foliaged chesnuts, or lustrous vines, to vary the monotony of hue, or spiring cypresses and domed stone-pines to multiply different forms, or long reaches of terraced shore, the melancholy monotony of impression, which is now so prominent, would be alleviated. The scene is too sad and lonely. The eye is tortured by the doomed ranks of firs and hemlocks that descend like resigned martyrs to the shore. It is not sublime, it is not the perfection of loneliness, it is not the best of its kind. Yet in the August moonlight the Empress asked me if it was not more beautiful than Como.

Consider Como. That strip of water blends the most characteristic Swiss and Italian beauty. From the dark and awful shadow of the Snow Alps which brood over its northern extremity, the lake stretches under waving vines and shimmering olives (that look as if they grew only by moonlight, said Mrs. Jameson's niece), under orange terraces, and lemons and oleanders, under sumptuous chesnuts and funereal cypresses, and ponderous pines, and all that they imply of luxurious palaces, marble balusters, steps, statues, vases and fountains, under these and through all the imagery of ideal Italy, deep and far into the very heart of Southern Italian loveliness. And on the shores near the town of Como, among the garden paths or hills that overhang the villas, you may look from the embrace of Italy straight at the eternal snow-peaks of Switzerland, as if on the divinest midsummer day your thought could cleave the year, and behold December as distinctly as June.

Lake Como is the finest combination of natural sublimity and beauty with the artistic results which that sublimity and beauty have inspired. This is the combination essential to a perfect and permanently satisfactory enjoyment in landscape. We modern men cannot be satisfied with the satisfaction of the savage, nor with that of any partial nature and education.

The landscape must be lovely as well as lonely, if

it is not sublime. We have a right to require in scenery the presence of the improvement which Nature there suggested. In the Alps, in Niagara, in the Sea, Nature suggests nothing more. They are foregone conclusions. No colossal statue carved from a cliff or palace hewn from a glacier are more than curious. Nor can you in any manner improve or deepen by art the essential impression of natural features so sublime.

When I speak of what Art can do for the landscape, you will not suppose that I wish Nature to be put in order, or that there should be only landscape gardens. The wide flowering levels of the Western Prairies, rolling in billows of golden blossoms upon the horizon, have a supreme and peculiar beauty, which no human touch can improve, and the lonely lakes of the Tyrol, dark-withdrawn under cliffs that do not cease to frown, charmed in weird calm which never the scream of wild fowl vexes, these, like the Alps and the Ocean, and Niagara, are beyond the hope of Art.

But it is different when Nature gives no landscape material, when the forms of hill and shore are monotonous or unimportant of themselves, yet suggests a latent possibility of picturesque effects.

This is not irreverent meddling with Nature,—it is only following her lead. Has no one observed how often the absence of water in the landscape leaves the landscape dead? Was never a castle so placed upon

hill or by river side that it grieved the eye of taste? What I say aims only at removing the occasion of such grief. The inextricable mazes of a forest are not imposing when you are entangled among them. A boundless forest is only sublime when the eye commands it by overlooking it. The forest is only the rude grandeur of the block; but the groves and gardens which wait upon the civilizing footsteps that unravel those mazes — are the graceful statue and the fine result.

So when the Empress said to me, “Is it not more beautiful than Como?” I said, No. Yet it is impossible not to perceive the great capabilities of Lake George.

The gleam of marble palaces, or of summer retreats of any genuine beauty, even a margin of grain-goldened shore, or ranges of whispering rushes beneath stately terraces—indeed, any amelioration of nature by art, would perfect the loveliness of Lake George, and legitimate the Empress's praises. At present it is invested with none of that enchanted atmosphere of romance in which every landscape is more alluring. Its interest and charm is the difference between an Indian and a Greek, between pigments and a picture.

Do not suppose that I am maligning so fair an object as the lake, even while I regard it as a good type of the quality of our landscape, compared with the

European. Space and wildness are the proper praises of American scenery. The American in Europe, with the blood of a new race and the hope of a proportioned future tingling in his veins, with a profound conviction that Niagara annihilates all other scenery in the world, and with a decided disposition to assert that Niagara is the type of the country, proclaims the extent of that country as the final argument in the discussion of scenery; and bears down with inland seas and the father of waters, and primeval forests and Prairies and Andes, to conclude his triumph.

In the general vague vastness of the impression produced, this is a genuine triumph. But it is a superiority which appeals more to the mind than to the eye. The moment you travel in America the victory of Europe is sure. For purposes of practical pleasure we have no mountains of an alpine sublimity, no lakes of the natural and artificial loveliness of the European, although one of ours may be large enough to supply all the European lakes. We have few rivers of any romantic association, no quaint cities, no picturesque costumes and customs, no pictures or buildings. We have none of the charms that follow long history. We have only vast and unimproved extent, and the interest with which the possible grandeur of a mysterious future may invest it. One would be loth to exhort a European to visit America for other reasons than social and

choly rocks. Our coast is monotonous and tame in form, and sandy and dreary in substance. Trees refuse to grow; fruit yearns for the interior; a sad dry moss smoothes the rocks, and solitary spires of grass shiver in the wind. But the Italian sea is mountain-shored: and all over the mountain sides the oranges grow, and the tropical cactus and vines wave, and a various foliage fringes the sea. You float at morning and evening on the Gulf of Salerno or the Bay of Naples and breathe an orange-odoured air. The vesper bell of the convent on the steep sides of the Salerno mountains showers with pious sound the mariners below. They watch the campanile as they sail, and a sweetness of which their own gardens make part, follows their flight. You can fancy nothing more alluring than these coasts, and nothing more mysterious and imposing than the mountains of Granada looming large through the luminous mist of the Spanish shore. This last is the scenery of Ossian.

All this implies one of the grandest and most beautiful natural impressions, and one of which our own sea-coast is totally destitute. And it is only an illustration of the absolute superiority of European scenery, in very various ways. The tendency of American artists towards Europe as a residence, is based not only upon the desire of breathing a social atmosphere, in which art is valued, or of beholding the galleries of

fame, but also upon the positive want of the picturesque in American scenery and life. Water and woods and sky are not necessarily picturesque in form, or combination, or colour; and here again there must be beautiful details, and the human impress of Art upon them, to satisfy the sense that craves the picturesque.

I sat one evening on the cliffs at Newport with Mot Notelpa, a friend who wears the onyx ring of which Sterling has written so good a story—and as we were discussing America, Mot, the gentleman of two hemispheres, said to me: “America is only a splendid exile for the European race.” The saying was no less forcible than fine, but I have no room to follow its meaning here. He did not say or mean that it was a pity to be born an American, or deny the compensation which gives us our advantages.

No man who has traversed Europe with his eyes and mind open, has failed to see that as our great natural advantage is space, so our great social and political advantage is opportunity, and every young man's capital the chance of a career. But the race, as a unit cultivated to the point of Art, is exiled, wherever the laws of Nature postpone Art.

You may be sure that I said no such thing to the Empress, as in the moonlight she provoked the comparison.

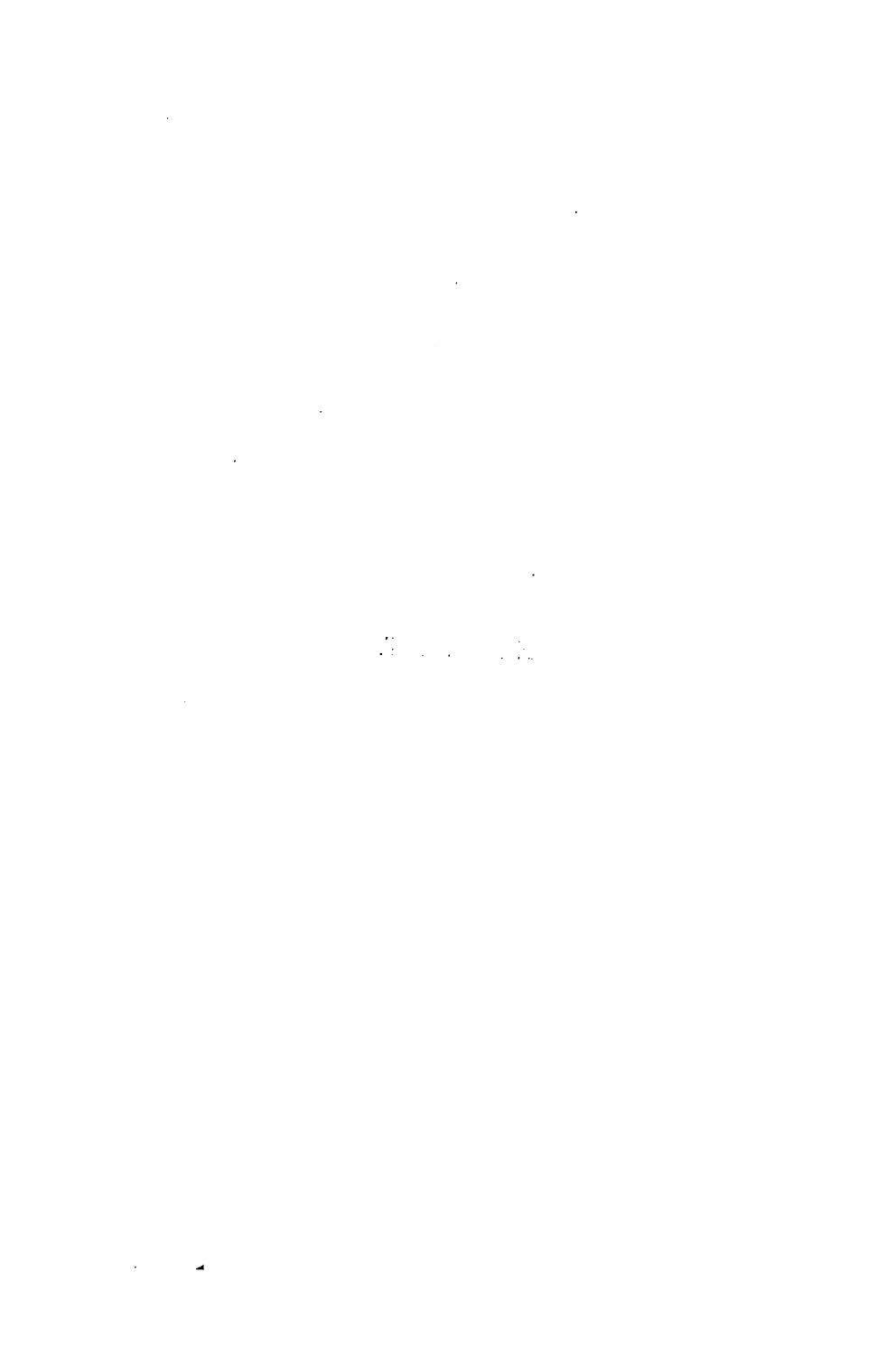
But the “No” of my reply meant all that. And

when, the next morning, we steamed in a stiff gale from Caldwell to Crown Point, the unhumanized solitude of the shores accorded well with the dusky legends of Indian wars that haunt the lake.

Lake George should be the motto of a song rather than the text of a sermon, I know. But it is beautiful enough to make moralizing poetry. It is the beauty of a country cousin, the diamond in the rough, when compared with the absolute elegance and fascination of Como. Nor will I quarrel with those whom the peasant pleases most—especially if they have never been to court.



NAHANT.



IX.

NAHANT.

“ Oh ! which were best, to roam or rest ?
The land's lap or the water's breast ?
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows, just
 Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must ;
 Which life were best on summer's eves ? ”

SEPTEMBER.

NAHANT is a shower of little brown cottages, fallen upon the rocky promontory that terminates Lynn beach.

There is a hotel upon its finest, farthest point, which was a fashionable resort a score of years since. But the beaux and belles have long since retreated into the pretty cottages, whence they can contemplate the hotel, which has the air of a quaint, broad-piazzed,

sea-side hostelry, with the naked ugliness of a cotton factory added to it, and fancy it the monument of merry, but dead old days.

The hotel is no longer fashionable. Nahant is no more a thronged resort. Its own career has not been unlike that of the belles who frequented it; for although the hurry and glare and excitement of a merely fashionable watering-place are past, there has succeeded a quiet genial enjoyment and satisfaction, which are far pleasanter. Some sunny morning, when your memory is busy with Willis's sparkling stories of Nahant life a quarter of a century ago, and with all the pleasant tales you may have collected in your wanderings, from those who were a part of that life, then step over with some friend, whose maturity may well seem to you the flower of all that the poet celebrated in the bud, and she will reanimate the spacious and silent piazza with the forms that have made it famous. And ever as you stroll and listen, your eyes will wander across the irregular group of cottages, and prohibit your fancying that the romance is over.

This is a kind of sentiment inseparable from spots like this. They concentrate, during a brief time, so many and such various persons, and unite them so closely in the constant worship and pursuit of a common pleasure, that the personal association with the spot becomes profound; and when the space is very

limited, as at Nahant, even painful. It is not surprising, therefore, that many who loved and frequented Nahant years ago, now recoil from it, and only visit it with the same fascinated reluctance with which they regard the faded love-tokens of years so removed that they seem to have detached themselves from life. This will explain to you much of the surprise with which Bostonians listen to your praises of Nahant. "Is any thing left?" say their smiles and looks; "it is a cup we drained so long ago."

Yet no city has an ocean-gallery so near, so convenient and rapid of success, so complete and satisfactory in characteristics of the sea, as Boston in Nahant.

You step upon the steamer in the city and in less than an hour you land at Nahant, and breathe the untainted air from the "boreal pole," and gaze upon a sublime sea-sweep, which refreshes the mind as the air the lungs. You find no village, no dust, no commotion. You encounter no crowds of carriages or of curious and gossiping people. No fast men in velvet coats are trotting fast horses. You meet none of the disagreeable details of a fashionable watering-place, but a sunny silence broods over the realm of little brown cottages. They stand apart at easy distances, each with its rustic piazza, with vines climbing and

blowing about the pillars, with windows and doors looking upon the sea.

In the midst of the clusters, where roads meet, stands a small temple, a church of graceful proportions, but unhappily clogged with wings. It is the only really catholic Church I know; for all services are held there in rotation, from the picturesque worship of the Roman faith to the severest form of Protestantism. The green land slopes away behind the temple to a row of willows in a path across the field, whence you cannot see the ocean: and it is so warm and sheltered, like an inland dell, that the sound of the sea comes to it only as a pleasant fancy.

This pretty path ends in the thickest part of the settlement. But even here it has no village air. It is still, and there are no shops, and the finest trees upon the promontory shadow the road that gradually climbs the hill, and then, descending, leads you across little Nahant to Lynn Beach. The area of Nahant is very small. From almost any cottage porch you survey the whole scene. But it has these two great advantages for a summer sojourn; an air of entire repose; for there seems to be no opportunity or convenience for any other than a life of leisure, and the perpetual presence of the sea.

At Nahant you cannot fancy poverty or labour.

Their appearance is elided from the landscape. Taking the tone of your reverie from the peaceful little temple and glancing over the simple little houses, with the happy carelessness of order in their distribution, and the entire absence of smoke, dust, or din, you must needs dream that Pericles and Aspasia have withdrawn from the capital, with a choice court of friends and lovers, to pass a month of Grecian gaiety upon the sea. The long day swims by nor disturbs that dream. If haply upon the cliffs at sunset, straying by "the loud-sounding sea," you catch glimpses of a figure, whose lofty loveliness would have inspired a sweeter and statelier tone in that old verse, you feel only that you have seen Aspasia, and Aspasia as the imagination beholds her, and are not surprised; or a head wreathed with folds of black splendour varies that pure Greek rhythm with a Spanish strain,—or cordial Saxon smiles and ringing laughter dissolve your Grecian dream into a Western reality.

For its sea, too, Nahant is unsurpassed. You cannot escape the ocean here. It is in your eye and in your ear for ever. At Newport the ocean is a luxury. You live away from it and drive to it as you drive to the Lake at Saratoga, and in the silence of midnight as you withdraw from the polking parlour, you hear it calling across the solitary fields, wailing over life and wondering at it. At Nahant the sea is supreme. The

place is so small that you cannot build your house out of sight of the ocean, and to watch the splendid play of its life is satisfaction and enjoyment enough. Many of the cottages are built directly on the rocks of the shore. Of course there are few trees, except the silver poplar, which thrives luxuriantly in the salt air, and which, waving in the fresh wind, and turning its glistening leaves to the sun, is like a tree in perpetual blossom. Flowers are cherished about some of the houses, and they have an autumnal gorgeousness, and are doubly dear and beautiful on the edge of the salt sea waste.

The air which the ocean breathes over the spot is electrical. No other ocean-air is so exhilarating. "After breakfast at Nahant," said Mot, "I feel like Cœur de Lion, and burn to give battle to the Saracens. But the brave impulse ends in smoke, and musing and chatting, and building castles in the clouds, you loiter away the day upon the piazza, ending by climbing about the cliffs at sunset, or galloping over the beach. Thus the ocean and the cliffs are the natural glories of Nahant, and the sky which you see as from the deck of a ship, and which adequately completes the simple outline of the world as seen from those rocks."

The cliffs are imposing. They are the jagged black edges of rock with which the promontory tears the sea. Chased by the tempests beyond, the ocean dashes in,

and leaping upon the rocks, lashes them with the fury of its scorn. In a great gale the whole sea drives upon Nahant.

One day the storm came, sullen and showery from the east, scudding in blinding mists over the sea, breaking towards the blue,—struggling, wailing, howling, losing the blue again, with a sharper chill in its breath and a drearier dash of the surf. Then an awful lull, an impenetrable mist, and the hoarse gathering roar of the ocean. The day darkened, and sudden sprays of rain, like volleys of sharp arrows, rattled gustily against the windows, and dull, booming thunder was flattened and dispersed in the thick moisture of the air. But in the gust and pauses of the wind and rain, the bodeful roar of the sea was constant and increasing. The water was invisible, except in the long flashing lines of surf that momentarily plunged from out the grey gloom of the fog, and that surf was like the advancing lines of an unknown enemy flinging itself upon the shore. Behind was the mighty rush of multitudinous waters, but more awful to imagination than any mere natural sound could be, for all the dead and lost, all who sailed and never came to shore, all who dreamed, and hoped, and struggled, and went down, and a world of joy with them; all their woe was in the ocean's wail, the death-shriek of as much happiness as lives. So the storm gathered terribly over the sea, in terror

commensurate with the sea's vastness, and beat upon Nahant like a hail of fire upon a besieged citadel.

The next day, as children seek upon a battle-field the buttons and ornaments that adorned the heroes, there were figures bending along the shore, to find the delicate, almost impalpable mosses, which the agony of the sea tosses up, as fragments of song drop from the torture of the heart. The mosses are pressed and cherished in volumes, each of which is a book of songs—of the airiest fancies,—of the aptest symbols,—of the delicatest dreams of the sea. Nothing in nature is more touching and surprising, nothing more richly reveals her tenderness than these fairy-treaded and infinitely various sea-weeds and mosses. They are the still, small voices, in which is the Lord.

Longfellow has sung all this in wave-dancing music :

“ So when storms of wild emotion,
 Strike the ocean
 Of the poet's soul, ere long
 From each cave and rocky fastness
 In its vastness,
 Floats some fragment of a song.
 From the far-off isles enchanted
 Heaven has planted
 With the golden fruit of Truth ;
 From the flashing surf, whose vision
 Gleams Elysian
 In the tropic clime of Youth.

From the strong will and the endeavour,
 That for ever
 Wrestles with the tides of Fate ;
 From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,
 Tempest-shattered,
 Floating waste and desolate.

Ever-drifting, drifting, drifting,
 On the shifting
 Currents of the restless heart ;
 Till at length in books recorded,
 They, like hoarded
 Household words, no more depart."

Nahant would not satisfy a New Yorker, nor, indeed, a Bostonian, whose dreams of sea-side summering are based upon Newport life. The two places are entirely different. It is not quite true that Newport has all of Nahant and something more. For the repose, the freedom from the fury of fashion, is precisely what endears Nahant to its lovers, and the very opposite is the characteristic of Newport.

Nahant is Northern in character, and Newport is Southern. The winds blow cool over Nahant, and you think of the North Sea, and Norsemen, and Vikings, and listen to the bracing winds as to Sagas.

Yet, if a man had any work to do, Nahant opens its arms to him, and folds him into the sweetest silence and seclusion. It has no variety, I grant. You stroll along the cliffs, and you gallop upon the beach, and

there is nothing more. But he is a tyro in the observation of Nature, who does not know that, by the sea, it is the sky-scape and not the landscape in which enjoyment lies. If a man dwelt in the vicinity of beautiful inland scenery, yet near the sea, his horse's head would be turned daily to the ocean, for the sea and sky are exhaustless in interest as in beauty, while, in the comparison, you soon drink up the little drop of satisfaction in fields and trees. The sea externally fascinates by its infinite suggestion, and every man upon the sea-shore is still a Julian or a Maddalo :

“ because the sea
Is boundless as we wish our souls to be.”

Besides it is always the ocean which is the charm of other shore resorts that have more variety than a Nahant. Even at Newport the eye is unsatisfied until it rests upon the sea, and as sea-side scenery with us is monotonous, there is rather more of the same thing at Newport than a greater variety. The genuine objection to Nahant is the feeling of its dulness, on the part of the young, and of its intense sadness of association with the elders.

The air is full of ghosts to them. At twilight they see figures glide pallid along the cliffs, and hear vague voices singing airy songs by moonlight in the rocky caves of the shore. Every stone, every turn is so


familiar, that the absence of the look and the word, which in memory are integral parts of every rock and turn, sharpen the sense of change into acute sorrow.

Nor to the visitor of to-day, who hears the stories of old Nahant days as he reads romances, is it possible to watch without tenderness of thought, even without a kind of sadness, if you will, the pleasant evening promenade along the Lynn beach. They bound over the beach in the favouring sunset, those graceful forms, fresh and unworn as the sea that breaks languidly beside them and slips smoothly to their horses' hoofs. I do not wonder that it slips so softly toward them, and touches their flight as with a musing kiss. I do not wonder that it breaks balmily upon their cheeks, and lifts their hair as lightly as if twilight spirits were toying with their locks. I do not wonder that as they turn homeward in the moonlight, and leave the sea alone, it calls gently after them and fills the air with soft sounds as they retire, nor that it rises and rises until it has gathered into its bosom the light tracks they left upon the shore. The sea knows the brevity of that glad bound along the beach. These are not the first, they shall surely not be the last, and while itself shall stay for ever fresh and unworn as now, there shall be furrows ploughed elsewhere, which even its waves can never smooth.

The evenings at Nahant have a strange fascination.

There are no balls, no hops, no concerts, no congregating under any pretence in hotel parlours. The damp night air is still, or throbs with the beating sea. The Nabanters sit upon their piazzas and watch the distant light-house or the gleam of a lantern upon a sail. Gradually they retire. Lights fade from the windows. Before midnight, silence and darkness are supreme. But we who remember Sorrento love the midnight, and, singing barcaroles, dream our dreams.

One night we sang no longer, but lost in silence watched the bay as if it had been the bay of Naples, when the sudden burst of a distant serenade filled the midnight. It was the golden crown of delight. The long, wailing, passionate strains floated around us, as if our own thoughts had grown suddenly audible, and the vague sadness, the nameless and inexpressible fascination of midnight music utterly enthralled us. Nothing but the music lived; the world was its own; we floated upon it, drifted hither and thither as it would. There was no moon, but the serenade was moonlight. There were no gardens to sweeten the night, but the music was a bower of Persian roses thronged with nightingales. Songs of Mendelssohn—the Adelaide of Beethoven—Irish melodies, whatever was melancholy, and exquisite, and meet for the hour and the spot, pulsed towards us upon the night,—and last of all, a wild, sweet, pensive strain, for which surely Shelley meant his lines :



" I arise from dreams of thee,
 In the first sweet sleep of night,
 When the winds are breathing low,
 And the stars are shining bright.
 I arise from dreams of thee,
 And a spirit in my feet
 Has led me—who knows how?—
 To thy chamber window, sweet !

The wandering airs they faint
 On the dark, the silent stream—
 The champak odours fail
 Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
 The nightingale's complaint,
 It dies upon her heart,
 As I must on thine,
 Beloved as thou art.

O lift me from the ground,
 I die, I faint, I fail !
 Let thy love in kisses rain
 On my lips and eyelids pale.
 My cheek is cold, and white, alas !
 My heart beats loud and fast ;
 Oh ! press it close to thine again,
 Where it will break at last."

At Nahant you shall live with the sea and sky, and yet not lose that pleasant social intercourse, which has a secret sweeter than the sea or the sky can whisper. Society at Nahant does not imply the polka, indeed,—that last perfection of civilization, but regard it, if you

choose, as the ante-chamber to the ball-room of Newport, where you may breathe the fresh air awhile, and collect your thoughts, and see the ocean and the stars, and remember with regret the days when happiness was in something else than a dance, the days when you dared to dream.

Nor be surprised, if, as you linger on those cliffs, remembering, one of the ghosts the elders see should lay his light hand upon your shoulder, and whisper as the sun sets—

“ Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O sea ;
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisher boy,
That he sings in his boat on the bay,
O well for the sailor lad,
That he shouts with his sister at play.

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill ;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea ;
But the tender grace of a day that is fled
Will never come back to me.”

NEWPORT.

X.

NEWPORT.

SEPTEMBER.

THE golden-rods begin to flame along the road-sides, and in the pleasant gardens of Newport. The gorgeous dahlias and crisp asters marshal the autumnal splendour of the year. All day long, Herrick's *Valedictory to the Summer* has been singing itself in my mind :

“ Fair daffodils, we weep to see
 You haste away so soon,
 As yet the early-rising sun
 Has not attained his noon.
 Stay, stay,
 Until the hastening day
 Has run,
 But to the even song ;
 And having prayed together, we
 Will go with you along !

We have short time to stay as you,
 We have as short a spring,
 As quick a growth to meet decay,
 As you or anything.

We die
As your hours do; and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain,
Or as the pearls of morning dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

The first chill breath of September has blown away the froth of fashion, and the cottagers anticipate with delight the cool serenity of the shortening days. The glory has utterly gone from that huge, yellow pagoda factory, the Ocean House. The drop has fallen, the audience is departed, the lights are extinguished, and it were only to be wished that the house might vanish with the season, and not haunt "the year's last hours," with that melancholy aspect of a shrineless, deserted temple.

I fear, however, that not only the glory of a season, but of success, has left the Ocean. The flame of fashion which burned there a year or two since, burned too intensely to last. The fickle goddess, whose temple it is, is already weary of democratic, congregational worship, and affects the privacy of separate orators. They rise on every hand. For fashion dwells in cottages now, and the hotel season is brief and not brilliant. The cottagers will come, indeed, and hear the Germania play, and hop in the parlour; but they come as from private palaces to a public hall, and dis-

appear again into the magnificent mystery of "cottage life."

When I first knew Newport it was a southern resort for the summer. The old Bellevue, and the present Truro-house, then Whitefield's, sufficed for the strangers. It was before the polka—before the days of music after dinner—and when the word "hop" was unknown even at Saratoga. Everybody bathed in those days, and all bathed together. There was a little bowling, some driving and riding, but no fast horses or fast men—above all, no fast women. The area on the hill, of which the Ocean House is the centre, was an unsettled region. There were not a dozen cottages, and the quaint little town dozed quietly along its bay, dreaming only of the southern silence, which the character of the climate and of the visitors, who were mainly southerners, naturally suggested.

Newport was the synonyme of repose. And an ingenious commentator would have surely have traced the Van Winkles to a Newport origin, although as surely, the "Rip" was a soubriquet of prophetic omen.

In those good old days New York loved Saratoga, and Newport was a name of no significance: but the Diana of that Ephesus looked suddenly seaward, and a flood-tide of fashion rose along Narragansett Bay, and overflowed Newport.

Singular are the deposits it left and is leaving. This amorphous Ocean; this Grecian Atlantic; this Bellevue enlarged out of all recognizable proportions; this whirl of fashionable equipages, these hats and coats, this confused din of dancing-music, scandal, flirtation, serenades, and supreme voice of the sea breaking through the fog and dust; this singing, dancing and dawdling incessantly; this crushing into a month in the country that which crowds six months in town—these are the foot-prints of fashion upon the sea-shore—these the material with which we build the golden statue to our Diana.

Beyond doubt, Newport is the great watering-place of the country. And as such, as assembling yearly the allied army of fashionable forces from every quarter, it is the most satisfactory point from which to review the host and mark the American aspect of fashion.

A very little time will reveal its characteristic to be exaggeration. The intensity which is the natural attribute of a new race, and which finds in active business its due direction, and achieves there its truest present success, becomes ludicrous in the social sphere, because it has no taste and no sense of propriety.

Society is as much a sphere of art as any of the more recognised spheres. To be rich, and to visit

certain persons, no more fits a man or woman for society, than to be twenty years old and to have a palette fits him to be an artist. When, therefore, a boy embarks in business at ten years of age and retires a man at forty or fifty, with a fortune, he is in the situation of one who in the passionate pursuit of the means has put the end out of his attainment. He has been so long making his shoes that by inaction his feet are withered, and he cannot walk. Yet the same man, who can never be an addition or an ornament to society, which demands the harmonious play of rare gifts, shall be very eminent and useful in that active life which requires the stern labour of very different powers.

Thus, as wealth is a primal necessity of society, because giving it a pedestal, and allowing its generous whims and fancies full play, so wherever wealth is not an antecedent, but must be acquired, the force and maturity of talent will always be swallowed up in the pedestal, and the statue will be light and imperfect, or, what is worse, an imbecile imitation. In a society formed under such circumstances, wealth will always enjoy an unnatural and undignified consideration.

Now the test of a man is his manner of using means, not of acquiring them. Any adroit labourer can quarry marble, but how many men could have wrought the

Apollo or the Venus? And how many men who have made fortunes spend money well?

I do not imply that they are not generous, and even lavish; but how much does the expenditure advance the great common interests of such? In this country where fortunes are yearly made and spent, what results of that spending have we to show? We have carriages and upholstery, and dinners and elaborate houses, and the waistcoats of Young America blaze with charms; and it returns from abroad with a knowledge of Parisian tailoring and haberdashery, which would be invaluable in the first Broadway establishment interested in those matters.

But consider that we get few pictures, statues, buildings, gardens, or parks, for the money we spend; consider that no rich man has yet thought to endow this country with a museum of casts, like the Mengs' Museum in Dresden, by which we should have all the finest sculptures of every age in the most perfectly accurate copy, only differing from the original in the material.

"I have made my money, and I am not going to throw it away," is the response of Cræsus to any such suggestion; and he builds a house in the most fashionable street, rather larger than his neighbours, but a reproduction of it in every upholstering detail.

Fine plate and glass, and Louis Quinze and Louis Quatorze deformities follow ; and Cræsus junior, and a pair of 2-40's, and a waggon of weight proportioned to the calibre of that young gentleman ; and, as he dashes up the Newport dust, some cynical pedestrian Timon, whitened and blinded by that dust, cannot help inquiring if this is the best statue that could be wrought out of all the marble old Cræsus quarried !

The houses and horses and carriages are not to be derided, for, as I said already, these are the pedestal ; they are the matters of course. But to the eye of the money-making genius, they are valuable for themselves, and not as a means, and there is the necessary mistake of a society so constituted. If a man buys a luxurious carpet, not that his friends may tread softly and their sense be soothed, but that it may proclaim his ability to buy the carpet, that it may say with green and red and yellow emphasis, "at least twenty thousand a year," it is no longer beautiful, and you feel the presence of a man who is mastered by his means, and to whom any other man with a larger rent-roll will be respectable and awful.

From all this spring the ludicrous details of our society. We dress too well ; we dance too well ; we are too gracious and graceful ; our entertainments are too elegant ; our modesty degenerates into prudery and bad taste ; we are "smart," but not witty ;

flashy, but not gay—Young America is too young. Its feet are beautifully small, and the head is proportioned to them. Society is only a ball. The heels have carried it against the head; and why not—since the education and daily life of the youth fits him for little else than shaking his heels adroitly?

We dance because we are unable to talk. The novels of foreign society fascinate us by their tales of a new sphere. Where are such women, we say, where such men? We fancy it is the despairing dream of a romance, but it is really the fact of foreign life. We are very chivalric; no nation reaches our point of courtly devotion to woman as woman. But our chivalry is not entirely unfeudalized; our courtliness does not always indicate respectful intercourse.

When I say that we dance too well, I speak of the disproportion of those performances to the rest of our social achievements. A fool crowned is doubly foolish. Fine dressing and dexterous dancing, when not subsidiary to the effect of personal beauty and character, are monstrous. Every girl who dances gracefully, should, in speaking, show that she is of graceful and winning nature. If she does not—if she is silly and simpers—you instinctively feel that her movement is artificial; that it is the gift of the dancing school, not a grace of nature; you have been deceived, and it is never again a pleasure to watch that dancing.

What is high society but the genial intercourse of the highest intelligences with which we converse? It is the festival of Wit and Beauty and Wisdom. Its conversation is a lambent light playing over all subjects, as the torch is turned upon each statue in the gallery. It is not an arena for dispute. Courts and Parliaments are for debate. Its hall of reunion, whether Holland House, or Charles Lamb's parlour, or Schiller's garret, or the Tuileries, is a palace of pleasure. Wine, and flowers, and all successes of art, delicate dresses studded with gems, and graceful motion to passionate and festal music, are its ornaments and arabesqued outlines. It is a tournament wherein the force of the hero is refined into the grace of the gentleman,—a masque, in which womanly sentiment blends with manly thought. This is the noble idea of society, a harmonious *play* of the purest powers. Nothing less than this satisfies the demand suggested by human genius and beauty, and the splendid sphere of the world in which they are placed.

Yes, you say, and how much of all this you have found in Newport.

At least I have found the form of it; and he must have travelled in vain who could not see, on some Grecian summer morning, even thus late in time, Alcibiades heading, with silken sails, for the Piræus,

or here in Newport, the features of a truly fine society through the fog of fashion.

The very exaggeration we have remarked betrays a tendency as well as a failure. When we have gone through our present discipline of French and English social bullying, from the shape of our shoes up to that of our opinions, we shall be the stronger to take the field for ourselves. Yet I doubt if in any country in which wealth is not hereditary, so that a permanent and large class is secure from the necessity of some kind of gold-digging, whereby man becomes of the earth, earthy, there can ever be the simplest and finest tone of society. The aggregate will be better, but will the single specimens be as good?

I do not insist upon it; it is a speculation. Yet, perhaps, this perfection of the individual is the jewel in the toad's head—the real result of the elaborate aristocratic organization of the whole world, which, I grant, was too cumbrous an operation for such a result.

The old mystery, myth, fable, fancy, or whatever else, that labour came by the Fall, will still suggest itself. We make the best of a bad case, and poets and philosophers speculate how to make labour attractive. But the end of our labour is, all the while, to dispense with labour.

“You lazy fellow,” says the working merchant to his friend who was an heir. “But why are you working,” retorts the heir upon the merchant, “but to secure the laziness I enjoy?”

At all events, hard labour, in any fair sense of the word, is incompatible with the finest beauty, whether personal or intellectual, and therefore with the most delicate bloom of society. But we Americans are workers by the nature of the case, or sons of labourers, who spend foolishly what they wisely won. And, therefore, New York, as the social representative of the country, has more than the task of Sisyphus. It aims, and hopes, and struggles, and despairs, to make wealth stand for wit, wisdom, and beauty. In vain it seeks to create society by dancing, dressing, and dining, by building fine houses, and avoiding the Bowery. Fine society is not exclusive, does not avoid; but all that does not belong to it drops away like water from a smooth statue. We are still peasants and parvenus, although we call each other princes and build palaces. Before we are three centuries old we are endeavouring to surpass, by imitating, the results of all art and civilization and social genius beyond the sea. By elevating the standard of expense, we hope to secure select society, but have only aggravated the necessity of a labour integrally fatal to the kind of society we seek.

It would be unfortunate if we were all drones, and it is foolish for any man to speak of labour in general as inimical to society. But I speak of that labour which is really drudgery, which is unfair to a man's intellectual nature. Hans Sachs was a shoemaker, but it is no less true that incessant hammering of sole leather also hammers the cobbler's just development away.

One extreme is as bad as the other. The drudge whose life is drained away in the inexorable toil of a mine or a factory, is as sad an object as the prodigal, whom wealth softens into imbecility. The Polar Zone freezes, the Tropics burn, the realms of the Equator sleep in golden calm between.

Fine society is a fruit that ripens slowly. We Americans fancy we can buy it. But you might as well go to market for fresh peaches in January. Noble aims and sincere devotion to them—the highest development of mind and heart—the fine aroma of cultivation which springs from the intimacy with all that human genius has achieved in every kind—simplicity and integrity—a soul whose sweetness overflows in the manner and makes the voice winning, and the movement graceful—here is the receipt for fine society; and although much of this is impossible, as for instance, high and various cultivation without wealth, yet wealth of itself cannot supply the lowest

element. The wealth of a foolish man is a pedestal which the more he accumulates, elevates him higher and reveals his deformity to a broader circle.

These most obvious facts are rarely remembered. Gilded vulgarity believes itself to be gold. But in vain we "cut" and discriminate and eschew, now warmly here and coldly there, as if many a Marquis of unsullied blood, did not dine for ten cents in Florence, and lie abed while his shirt was washed, and then enter the saloons of fashion as a King his council-chamber.

We separate and exclude, as if some fine morning the little blackamoor of a sweep would not climb down the chimney, and fall naturally asleep on the best bed, soot and all, though he may never have touched linen since the sheets of his cradle.

We Americans are gifted with the talent of getting rich. But the money-getting is not the money-spending genius, and the former nourishes a love of wealth as an end, which is a love fatal to society. We are not peculiar in our regard for money, but we are in the *exclusiveness* of our regard for it. Wealth will socially befriend a man at Newport or Saratoga, better than at any similar spot in the world, and that is the severest censure that could be passed upon those places.

But life at Newport is not all moralizing, even the cynical Timons of which I spoke; and if you regard this chapter as our chat after dinner, upon piazza, in the next we will stroll in the pleasant part of Newport.

NEWPORT, AGAIN.



XI.

NEWPORT, AGAIN.



SEPTEMBER.

THIS island was originally called Rhode Island from some fancied resemblance in its climate to that of the Isle of Rhodes. I do not wonder at the suggestion for Newport is washed by a southern sea, and the air that breathes over it is soft and warm. Its climate is an Italian air. These are Mediterranean days. They have the luxurious languor of the south. Only the monotonous and melancholy coast reminds you that you are not gazing upon Homer's sea, and that the wind is not warmed by African sands. All day—if you have been in Italy and know its southern shore,—you look for the orange-groves and vineyards; all night you listen for the barcaroles.

I heard a simple and natural explanation of the softness of the Newport climate, which attributed it to

the immediate neighbourhood of the Gulf-Stream. The current suddenly ~~turns~~ westward near the island, and according to the story, actually ~~turns~~ ~~is~~. Hence the warmer weather and softer airs here than at spots not far removed, especially at Nahant. Upon leaving Newport the line of the Gulf-Stream stretches westward, leaving a broad space of sea between itself and the Massachusetts shore, into which flows the cold water from the north, by which the winds warmed over the current are again chilled, and blow into Massachusetts Bay with the sharp sting that gives a name to Boston east winds. Vast quantities of seaweed are driven in upon the Newport coast, also, indicating the neighbourhood of the Gulf-Stream. If I do not mistake, this course of the Gulf-Stream is laid down in Maury's chart.

But from whatever cause, the climate of Newport is very bland and beautiful. It is called bracing, but it is only pure. From the higher land of the interior of the island you may see the ocean any sunny day, basking and sparkling in the light, seemingly girding the island with a broad visible belt of warmth. If you see it across smooth, lawn-like slopes, with a cluster of trees, as towards the Spouting Horn, it will fascinate you no less than Undine was fascinated, and draw you to the shore. Follow it and incline towards the fort. Pass the numerous gates, gallop along the hard avenues



towards Bateman's, and push on to the shore beyond. Then slowly pace along the rocky marge.

The waves tumble in here, fresh and full from the mid-sea. To the right is the southern shore of the main land, and by the light-house upon Beaver-Tail pass the sloops and schooners heading towards Long Island Sound. It is not a friendly coast; for at a little distance in the sea, the waves break and foam over hidden rocks. That ledge is Brenton's Reef, and here in the sand, on the very shore, stands two headstones, side by side. Their silence tells the same story as the fretfulness of the rock-rent waves beyond. If you can cross a stream that intervenes, and are not appalled by stone walls, you may still keep the shore, and skirting Lily Pond, which has the stern aspect of a solitary mountain tarn, and is only separated from the sea by a strip of sand, you emerge upon the crescent beach of the Spouting Horn, a throat of rock in the cliff, through which, from a narrow cave below, the water, during storms, is forced some forty or fifty feet into the air.

Just beyond the Spouting Horn is the southern point of the island. It is a rocky bluff, planted now in corn, but from the highest point commanding an unobstructed horizon, including the town removed into picturesque distance, and the intermediate reaches of green field, sprinkled with occasional groups of trees.

The cliffs around the Spouting Horn are magnificent ocean features, and the shore of the mainland is visible. The sea-sweep enfolds all, satisfying eye and mind.

This is the true site of a Newport residence. The situation suggests a cottage of the same general character as the Nahant houses. No one could go beyond you, no one could interfere; and, in the present rapid settlement of the island, it will not be long before it is occupied. A little farther on are the finest cliffs in Newport, upon which, after southerly storms, the sea dashes itself in magnificent surfs that set the shore in flashing foam. These are the haunts of the bass-fishers. We have left our horses behind, for there is only a foot-path along the cliffs, and walls and fences must be scaled. But by a happy old condition of the sale of these lands, the path will long remain public. For when the colonists took the land from the Indians, a right of way along the sea was secured to them for ever, for fishing and the gathering of sea-weed. At least so runs the tradition at Newport, and the convenient stiles and holes in the walls, even upon properties already settled, confirm its practical truth.

Or is it, only, perhaps, that no man upon this pleasant island feels that he has the right to exclude others from the sea-shore,—the sea, like the air, being the only unquestioned universal heritage in nature!



The fields upon the cliffs are flat and treeless. A dry, crisp grass carpets them quite to the edge of the precipice. It is thus the finest ocean-walk, for it is elevated sufficiently for the eye to command the water, and is soft and grateful to the feet, like inland pastures. No enterprise has yet perceived that the true situation for a Newport hotel is upon the cliffs. A broad piazza over the sea would brook no rival in attraction, and the citizen who sought the place for the ocean air, and the ocean view, would not turn, without a sigh, back into the dusty road, upon which stands, out of the ocean's sight and sound, the glaring, amorphous pile which is his home for the nonce.

In the serene beauty of September weather, the cliffs are doubly beautiful. Fashion, the Diana of the summer solstice, is dethroned; that golden statue is shivered, and its fragments cast back into the furnace of the city, to be again fused and moulded; and out of the whirring dust and din the loiterer emerges into the meditative autumnal air.

"A feeling of sadness," says Coleridge, "a peculiar melancholy, is wont to take possession of me alike in Spring and in Autumn. But in Spring it is the melancholy of Hope; in Autumn it is the melancholy of Resignation." Strolling among these dry fields, upon the sea, you may perceive plainly enough the difference. In the beginning of the month, a cluster of

days, like a troop of tropical birds, with fiery breath and plumage, breathed torrid airs over the island. It was the final ecstasy and festival of summer. But a huge, black cloud gathered one Saturday afternoon, and with lightning and flooding rain dispersed those tropical estrays, and left us cool and quiet, mind and body, in the rich, yellow, autumnal light.

Among those dry fields I ramble in these delicious but melancholy days, looking at the sea, and again babbling Herrick, whose few good verses, among all that he wrote, are like the few drops of *vino d'oro*—wine of gold—distilled from the must of Lebanon vineyards. What pastoral sweetness and genuine personality of feeling in this poem.

TO MEADOWS.

“Ye have been been fresh and green ;
 Ye have been fill'd with flowers ;
 And ye the walks have been,
 Where maids have spent their hours.

You have beheld how they
 With wicker arks did come,
 To kiss and bear away
 The richer cowslips home.

You've heard them sweetly sing,
 And seen them in a round ;
 Each virgin, like a spring,
 With honeysuckles crown'd.

But now we see none here,
Whose silv'ry feet did tread,
And with dishevell'd hair
Adorn'd this smoother mead.

Like unthrifths, having spent
Your stock, and needy grown,
You're left here to lament
Your poor estates alone."

The tenderness of feeling excited by the loveliness of the waning year begets a sympathy for this season more personal than for any other. It is the sympathy with decline and death, the awe before the mystery of which they are the avenue and gate. In the journey of the year, the autumn is Venice, spring is Naples certainly, and the majestic maturity of summer is Rome. Not dissimilar is the feeling with which you glide through the shadow of crumbling Venetian magnificence, and the sentiment with which you tread the gorgeous bowers of autumn. What life, what hope, what illimitable promise, once filled the eye here, and fed the imagination! Venice failed to fulfil that promise to experience. Has any summer ever kept it to the life?

See in the radiance and flashing cloud-forms of this sky, how the year repeats the story of June, how it murmurs these dying spring songs! Upon pensive thought you drift through the splendours of the decadent year, as in a black gondola through Venice.

“ Over the gleaming watery meadows,
 Through the dusk of the palace shadows,
 Like a dark beam mournfully sliding,
 Steals the gondola, silently gliding.

And the gardener this morn belated,
 Urges his flower-barque, fruit-freighted,
 Like a summer-perfected vision
 Through the dream of that sleep elysian.

To these palaces ghostly glory
 Clings, like the faintly remembered story
 Of an old diamonded dowager, mumbling
 Tales of her youth from her memory crumbling.”

It is not possible to shun the influence of these days. The deep dome of the sky frescoed by the last sunbeams with delicate tracery of vapours and luminous masses of cloud, the endless extent of the sea, which only seems small when you are upon it, the uniform line of the coast, simple, grand material outlined as grandly—these store your mind with sweet and solemn imagery, and indicate, even here where the wassail-worship of our Ephesian Diana has but now reeled away, the altar of the unknown God.

Nor can you avoid wondering what evidence you shall find in the winter that the city has summered upon the sea-side. If yearly we are thus submitted to the most beautiful and profound natural influences, and the tone of our society remains still as fiercely frivolous, it is not strange that the September musings of a cynical Timon make him still more cynical. How

can he help dreaming dreams of a race that should show throughout its winter-life the freshness and vigour of its summer neighbourhood ?

If a young man passes a few years in Europe, and returns with nothing but the air of a figure in the last print of fashions, he can only please the ninth part of a man. He will pain and mortify all the rest. His mien, and motion, and conversation, should show that he has seen, and heard, and felt, what so many years to behold, because they could see to the utmost, yet must die without seeing.

A travelled man should be Painting and Sculpture. He should be radiant with art, and informed with experience: he should be a channel into the new world of all the best influences of the old, or he has defrauded his country, himself, and those who might have been all that he has failed to be, by not relinquishing the opportunity to another. I look into his eyes, but instead of the Alps and Italy, I see only the Boulevards or Notre Dame de Lorette. I hear him speak and catch a fine French oath, but no Miserere, no Campagna song or barcarole. I mark his manner with women, but I do not perceive that he has seen Raphael's Madonnas; with men, but I do not feel the presence of the Apollo, or the manliness of Michael Angelo. Ixion has come down from heaven, having banqueted with all the gods, and remembers only the pattern of the table-cloth.

If this is our high requirement of the individual who has enjoyed fine opportunities, what should we not demand in the character of a society, which every year repairs to the fountains of mental and physical health? In its eye should be the clearness of the sky, in its voice the sound of the sea, in its movement the grace of woods and waves.

It is very well to carry the country to the city, but is very ill to bring the city to the country. The influence of the city is always to be resisted, because its necessary spirit is belittling, personal, and selfish; that of the country, on the other hand, is to be fostered, because it is impersonal and universal. The exhilarating stimulus of the contact of men in the city is useful, sometimes essential, but always dangerous. The tranquillizing friendliness of the country favours repose, perhaps inactivity and intellectual rest, but is always humane and elevating. The city, in its technical, social sense, is always ludicrous, and if it were possible, insulting in the country. There is nothing finer in Nature and Art than the sublime scorn inherent in their virginal purity. A great picture will not be "seen," nor a grand landscape "done." In the crowds of listless idlers who infest Rome yearly, how many see the Transfiguration, or hear the Miserere, or know the profound pathos of the Campagna? Nature and Art are veiled goddesses, and only Love and Humility draw the curtains.

We must leave in the city, then, as far as possible, the social fictions of the city, if we hope ever to master them rather than to be mastered by them. And that is precisely what is most rarely done ; precisely what we Americans do less than any other people.


I remember, as we floated about the canals in Venice, how we used to imagine a life and society worthy the climate and the poetic city. The women of those fancies were of beauty so rare, and of character at once so lofty and lovely, that the sumptuous palaces and the superb portraits of Titian, and Tintoret, and Giorgione, were the only natural homes and ornaments of their life. The men of those dreams were so grave and gracious, of such intellectual sweep, of such subtle human sympathy, that no portrait in the great council hall of the Doge's palace quite suggested their mien. Life was a festival worthy its sphere—worthy the illimitable splendour and capacity of the world.

They were but gondola dreams, those fancies—the articulate song of the mystery and magnificence of Venice. They were only pictures on the air—the evanescent mirage of romance that hovers about that spot. Yet, was it strange that the pleasant dream inspired by so singular a triumph of Art as the city of Venice should return upon the cliffs at Newport, in view of the possibilities and influences of a society just beginning.

Will you think me captious if I confess, what we all feel, that the life of Nature—Nature, whose head is Man—censures our life more than any philosophy? If a man should pass suddenly from a regal mid-summer day in Windsor Forest to a drawing-room at St. James, would he feel that he had advanced from the less to the greater? The trees and flowers fulfil their utmost destiny; but the Right Honourable Sir Jabesh Windbag—as Timon Carlyle dubs the courtier—does he impart a finer charm to the summer day?

It was not strange that the Venetian life recurred, but it was sad. We shall never fulfil the destiny that hope has allotted us, since hope always paints human portraits with the colours of the ideal. Even upon these cliffs the spring promised a brighter summer than was possible; for the spring is a poet, and sings to us in our speech the visions beheld in other spheres.

Life is a rich strain of music suggesting a realm too air to be. How often we seem to touch the edge of some high and poetic manner of life—how we revenge ourselves upon drudgery and Wall-street, by fancying an eternal summer in Naples bay, where the syrens should sing in the moonlight and every fisher-girl upon the shore should be Graziella. Our ancestral estates—the possibilities of hope of which we are heirs—all lie in the future. In the golden tropics of distance flash their towers, and their trees lean over singing



streams. There our coming is awaited and the bells would fain chime that we are of age. There, looking from the windows, or deep retired in interior chambers, the beautiful who were our dream and our despair await us. Over those tropic lands the sun never sets—those flashing towers do never crumble; in those palace gardens gush the fountains of eternal youth, and all the wide horizon for ever flames with summer.

So upon the most distant horizon of life hope floats, a beautiful mirage. To reach those pleasant places is the aim of all our endeavours. A man would be rich, that he may have a fine house hung with pictures and adorned with sculptures. Even the greatest drudge pays the homage to his nature of, at least, saying that. In youth it seems that we could reach out our hands and ourselves unlock the door. But those golden gates shall never be unbarred. Gradually they recede, clouds descend and fogs rise, and at times obscure the spectacle altogether. We resign ourselves to our condition, we go about our work, but still that stately domain of ours glimmers before our eyes—a vision in the shifting clouds to the toiling husbandman. Still, strains of its wild and winning music peal down the wind—the sweet clang of court-revels to the lonely wanderer.

Although we are thus defrauded of our rights, royalty never dies from our hearts; and, living in hovels, we

are still the heirs of palaces. Strolling in this mood beneath the September sunsets, I can yet see fair and graceful figures moving along the cliffs—fair and graceful enough to walk by the sea and under the sky, as kings and queens their halls.

The great enjoyment at Newport is riding. The hard, black beach is the most perfect race-course, and the heaving of the sea sympathizes with the rider and inspires him. The finest beach in Newport is the second, a mile beyond the crescent beach by the town; but it always seems lonely and distant, and can only be gained by ploughing along a sandy road among the wan fields upon the shore. On a pleasant afternoon the first beach is alive with running horses and light waggons. You know we are dandies in our carriages as well as in our dress, and while they play their little pranks upon the edge of the sea, which plunges slowly and heavily along the shore, the impression is that of the recumbent statue of the Nile in the Vatican and the garden of the Tuileries, covered and pleased with the gambols of the little ones.

One evening in September I was returning with a friend, from the southern shore by Bateman's. It was one of the golden twilights which transfigure the world. It seemed, in fact, as if we were very near that domain which lies so deep in the future, and our horses paced along cheerily, as if they shared the exhilaration of the

hour. We passed through the town, by the groups sauntering on the road and sitting under the piazzas and at the windows of houses, and descended to the first beach. The sun was just gone and the sky was a dome of molten gold, except toward the eastern horizon upon the sea, where grey vapours gradually clouded the glory.

We turned our backs upon the sunset, and facing the sea and the grey east, we leaned forward, and our horses flew over the beach. They did not seem to touch the earth, but we were borne on as if by the sway of the sea. Faster and faster we flew, and the cold line of the point before us, stretching far into the ocean, and the dull night that lowered beyond it, and the black beach beneath us, were as the stern landscape of the extremest North contrasted with the southern splendours we had left behind. It was wild and elfish, and the hoofs of the horses rang like the dumb cadence of an old saga. Our hair streamed on the wind that began to curdle chill across the sea.—and gaining the end of the beach we reined up, turned suddenly, and were in another zone, in another world.

The west was gorgeous, still, and warm. The little hill on which stands the town, and the fields between it and us, were a belt of blackness drawn between the glow of the west and the glossy, glittering smoothness of the beach, upon whose moist surface the slant light of the late sunset blended with the moonlight that

quivered along the crumbling ridges of the surf. The sea beyond, heaved silvery, far into the night. The gorgeous west—the black land—the glossy beach—the silvery sea,—these made up the world in that moment. nor was the world ever more beautiful and sublime. Along the way paved with gleams of sunset and of moonrise, our horses slowly paced. No realm of faery was ever more surprising and alluring; no such scene was yet painted on canvas or in print; and though it faded every moment and the world resumed its old expression, that glance has bewildered me for ever, and I am not sure that it was not Undine who rode with me that evening, and compelled the sun, moon, and sea, to offer her magnificent homage.

Like all sea-sides, Newport has those fogs and mists which are the delight of artists—which are themselves artists of a fantastic fancy—and to which even the belles are not always averse, for what the sun does the fog undoes, being the rare cosmetic that removes the brown scar of the sun's touch. These fogs, however, are not always pleasant. They are thick, drenching clouds, and wet you through as thoroughly as the most insinuating ruin. Moreover, they brood over your spirits with a dull gloom akin to their effect in extinguishing the landscape. But in coming and going, and wherever they are not too dense, they are very welcome to the lover of the picturesque.

In the morning, perhaps, and especially in June and

September, as you saunter under a cloudless sky, you see a vague roll of mist muffling the horizon line of the sea. If you have been bounding over the beach with Undine the evening before, you are acclimated to wonders, and fancy, simply, that a part of the sky has fallen upon the water. Toward dinner you observe that it is nearer, that it advances, rolling over the sea and blotting out everything in its path. The sun strikes a sail between you and it—there is a momentary flash, lost in the dull darkness of the mist.


By dinner-time it beleaguers the island—it overcomes it—it penetrates at windows and doors. Woe to starched muslins! Woe to cravats! Woe to choice note-paper! Woe to everything but India-rubber shoes. The band ~~may~~ well play in the hall after dinner. The world beyond the piazza is a vast white opacity,—the ghost of the ocean, which thus asserts the sea's sovereignty over the island. It is damp and chill. The music breathes winning waltzes,—but who could dance here save mermaids—and Undine, haply, who loves the mists, and clothes herself with the grace of clouds? The horses must be countermanded. A slight wind shivers through the dampness, and the boughs in the little green yard by the piazza shed a string of diamonds. The gaiety of Newport is suddenly quenched, and if you steal quietly up to your room, and opening your window, listen, you will hear

the invisible sea encompassing the island with its ceaseless dash, and booming soft scorn through the fog.

It breaks suddenly and in rounding masses recedes. The sun bursts through the mist and shines into our very hearts. The clouds roll away from our spirits, we leap into the saddle and give galloping chase to the skirts of the foe. Fold upon fold it sweeps retreating over the island—embracing the few melancholy trees and leaving them glittering; nor pauses at the shore, but softly over the water the flight of the fog continues, until our sky is rosy again as in the morning, and only a vague roll of mist muffles the horizon-line of the sea.

I rode one afternoon with Undine along the southern shore of the island, by the lonely graves of which I have spoken. We could only see a few feet over the water, but the sea constantly plunged suddenly out of the heavy fog which was full of hoarse roars and wailings—the chaotic sound of the sea. We took the homeward path through the solitary fields, just unfamiliar enough to excite us with a vague sense of going astray. At times, gleams of sunlight, bewildered like ourselves, struggled surprised through the mist and disappeared. But strange and beautiful were those estrays, and I well understood why Turner studied vapours so long and carefully.

Two grander figures are not in contemporary bio-



graphy than that of Coleridge, in Carlyle's Sterling, looking out from Highgate over the mingled smoke and vapour which buries London as in lava Pompeii is buried, and that of Turner, in some anonymous but accurate sketches of his latter days, at his cottage on the edge of London, where, apart from his fame, and under a feigned name, he sat by day and night upon the housetop, watching the sun glorify the vapours and the smoke with the same splendour which he lavishes upon the evening west, and which he deemed the especial privilege of the sky. Those two men, greatest in their kind among their companions, illustrate with happy force what Wordsworth sang:—

“ In common things that round us lie,
Some random truths he can impart,
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.”

Gazing from his Highgate window with “large, grey eye,” did Coleridge see more than the image of his own mind and his own career, in that limitless city, wide-sparkling, many-turreted, fading and mingling in shining mist,—with strange voices calling from its clouds,—the solemn peal of Cathedral chimes and the low tone of the vesper bell? And out of that London fog with its irresistible splendours, and out of the holy vapours which float serene amid the Alps, has Turner quarried his colossal fame. There is no grander les-

son in any history of any art, than the spectacle of the greatest painter of our time, sitting upon his housetop, and from the mist which to others was but a clog and inconvenience, and associated in all men's minds only with link-boys and lanterns, plucking the heart of its mystery and making it immortal.

In the evening I found myself alone upon the beach, surrounded by the fog. I seemed to be upon the hard bottom of the sea, for nothing was visible save occasionally the moon, as the fog thinned over my head—the seemingly circular spot of beach upon which I stood—and the long, white seething line of surf that fell exhausted along the shore. The confused moan of the sea was the only and constant sound. Fascinated by the strangeness of the scene, lost in the fog, whose murky chill lay damp upon my hands and face, I wandered over the beach. I ran, but could not escape the small round spot of black beach—the encompassing dead white cloud—the moon, blotted out and again revealed. I shouted aloud, but my voice fell flat and lost, and the murmur of the surf boomed in melancholy mockery. I stood still, but the continuous sound did not destroy the weird silence. I ran to the edge of the sea; the water broke over my feet and slid far up the beach and washed my tracks away. I advanced constantly with no sense of progress, and saw suddenly a huge, fantastic figure looming ominously through the

fog-cloud and confronting me. I stopped as if an army had risen before me, then ran toward the figure, which dwindled into a shapeless block, left upon the sand and distorted by the mist into a goblin.

The wildness of the feeling passed. The constant iteration of the sea's wail, that wandered through the enchanted silence, as if seeking sympathy, gradually possessed my heart with its own sadness, and as the fog thinned slowly, and wreathed along the beach, curling and falling—skirts of the flowing drapery of Ossian's ghosts—that exquisite and mournful song in Alton Locke came singing into my mind. You remember the scene in which the life of the young poet culminates in the parlour of the Bishop, and in the presence of the Lady Eleanor. She has been singing a wild, melancholy air, of which the words were poor, but whose meaning the poet feels in his inmost soul, quickened as he is by the exhilaration and intoxication of passion in which he was reeling. Lady Eleanor asks for some words fit for the melody, and struck by what he says, appeals to him to write them.

At the same moment his eyes fall upon a water-colour of Copley Fielding's, representing a long, lonely reach of sea-beach—a shroud of rain drifting along the horizon, and straggling nets rising and falling upon the surf. Its utter desolation, though he little thinks it at the moment, images his own life; and returning home, in the wild whirl of nameless regret and pas-

sionate sorrow, he writes the lines. It is a rare fortune for the artist that his picture is so perfectly translated into words. Who that feels the penetrating pathos of the song but sees the rain-shroud, the straggling nets, and the loneliness of the beach? There is no modern verse of more tragic reality.

“ ‘O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home,
 Across the sands o’ Dee,—
 The western wind was wild and dank wi’ foam,
 And all alone went she.
 The creeping tide came up along the sand,
 And o’er and o’er the sand,
 And round and round the sand,
 As far as eye could see ;
 The blinding mist came down and hid the land,
 And never home came she.
 Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
 A tress o’ golden hair
 O’ drowned maiden’s hair
 Above the nets at sea ?
 Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
 Among the stakes on Dee.
 They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
 The cruel, crawling foam,
 The cruel, hungry foam,
 To her grave beside the sea ;
 But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
 Across the sands o’ Dee.’ ”

The night became more merciful as I sauntered homeward from the beach. The fog rolled away, the unclouded moon shone, and the air was warm and



still. The lights were extinguished in the cottages, only in the great hotels some windows were yet bright. I turned up a lane between two of the pleasantest places upon the island. Through the moonlit trees, like ghosts of sound haunting the moonlight, stole the faint tinkle of a guitar. A manly voice, rich and full, chimed in unison, and sang this song of Browning's, amid whose pauses the listening murmur of the sea wistfully repeated that other refrain—

“ Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair ?”

The difference was that between the moon-misted sea-beach and the moonlight garden.

“ There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest ;
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest ;

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of
lustre

Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild grape's
cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble.
And her voice's music—call it the well's bubbling—the bird's
warble.

And this woman says, ‘ My days were sunless and my nights were
moonless,


Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak
tuneless,

If you loved me not'—and I who (ah, for words of flame !) adore
her!

Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—
I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as her she
makes me.”

I hoped to have told you of the Corso or semi-weekly promenade at the Fort, which began gallantly enough, but declined rapidly, because velvet-coated fast gentlemen would trot their fast horses over the ground as if it had been a race-course; and because, instead of forming two contrary lines of carriages, to enable us to pass and see and chat, or stopping, as at the Cascine in Florence, for conversation, we all trotted meekly one way in each other's dust. With our graceful carriages and the tamed beauty of American women, this should become one of the most attractive features of Newport. But our exaggeration spoiled it. What American is ever going behind? What is the use of a 2-40, if you are to walk in a ring? So we must wait a little, until jockeys ripen into gentlemen, and eagerness mellows into elegance. I wonder if a wit from Mercury coming to summer on the earth would suspect that our Newport aim was enjoyment.

But there is another Fort, a circular ruin upon the rocky point of an island at the entrance of the harbour, which you can reach in a half hour from Newport, and is well worth an afternoon. Deere recruited a party one day for the excursion. We went into the town and put off from the wharf in a sailing-boat. The harbour was white and alive with similar craft, bending in the wind, and scudding to and fro. We passed under the long, low embankment of Fort Adams, and across the



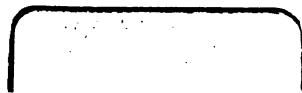
mouth of the harbour to a group of mound-like rocks. Crowning the summit of one of them was our goal, called, appropriately enough, from the aspect of the rocks, Fort Dumpling.

You glide from the beautiful harbour directly into the smooth water of the cove-like reaches among the rocks. The bright vegetation clinging to the crevices of their sides is touched *Turneresquely* by the afternoon sun, and as you land upon the island, its low, bare, melancholy outline, reminds you of days and feelings upon the Roman Campagna. You climb over the rocks and pasture-lands, luxuriant with scentless asters, crisp everlasting, and yellow golden rods, and find them the only garrison of the ruined old fort, which is perched upon a cliff over the sea. They nod along the ramparts, and flame in the crumbling walls. Girls toss pebbles through the port-holes, and muse upon the distant sails at sea.

But best of all, quaint old Newport lies white against its hills, and the sinking sun plays with it, making it what city you will, of all the famous and stately towns upon the sea. •



Let us leave it so, the last picture of a pleasant summer, beneath which we will write this inscription:



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